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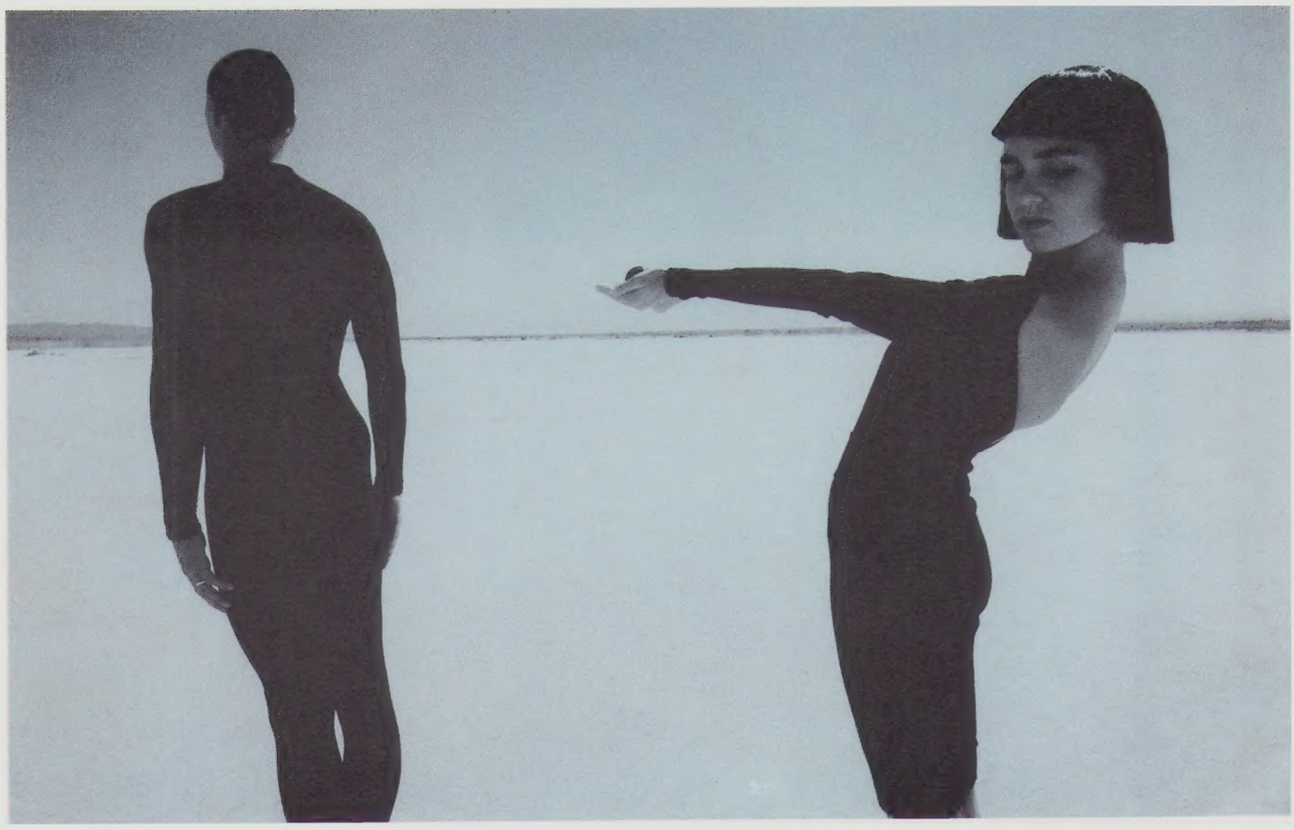

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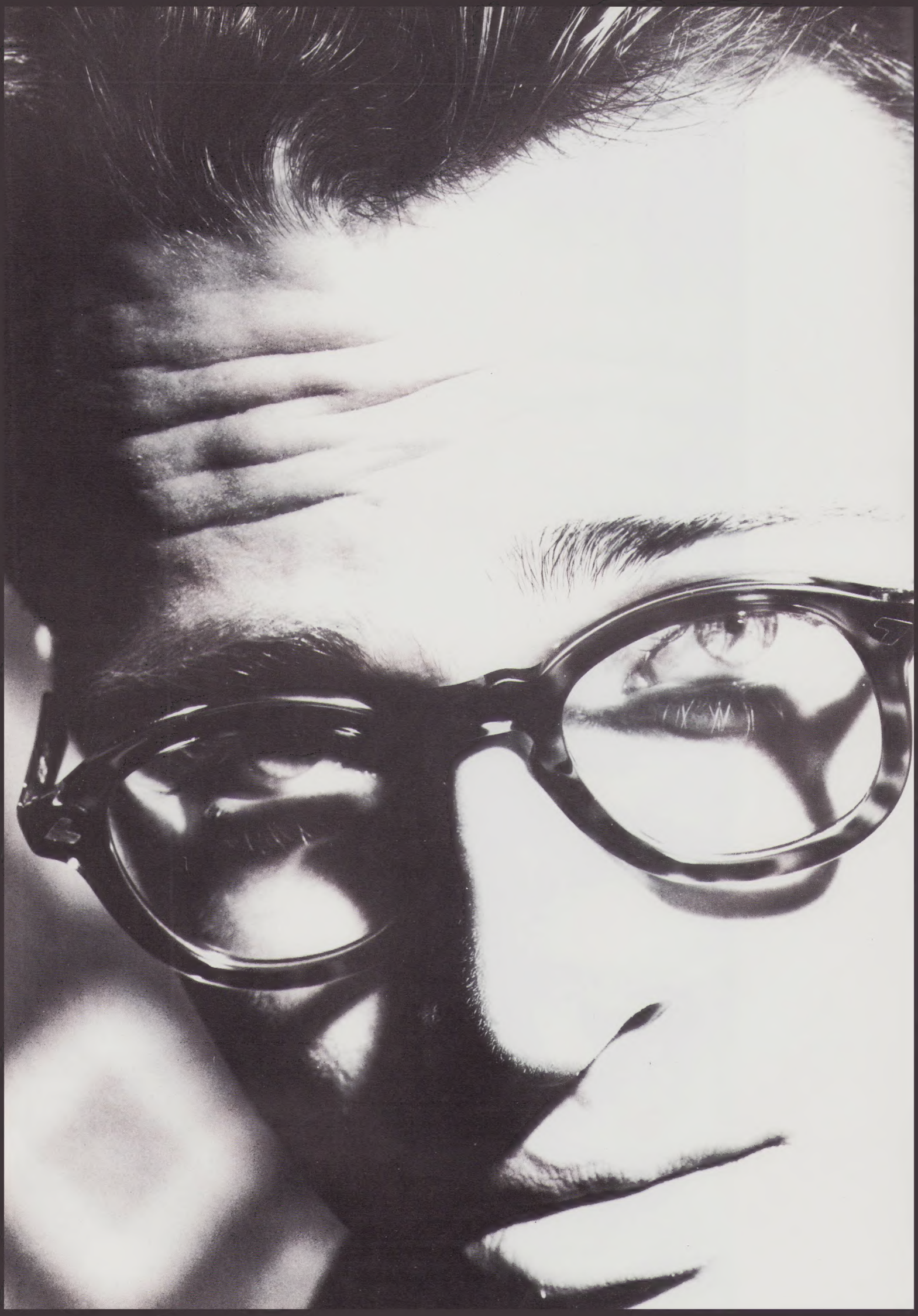

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# Expo

## JEFF WEISS

**Kathryn L. Williams**

Jean-Paul Sartre might have been talking about Jeff Weiss when he suggested that playwright Jean Genet was trying to "jerk off the universe."

Weiss is an actor, playwright and director whose idea of theater is a carnival of emotion, a psychosexual explosion of society's deepest, darkest fantasies. His work draws upon the historical, spiraling energy of Moliere, is as inventive and lewd as 16th century Italian commedia dell'arte, and is procured from a smattering of anything and a splattering of everything. Weiss's brand of theater knows no limits. He teases, tricks, cajoles, annoys and, above all else, entertains. Watching a show written and performed by Jeff Weiss is like being trapped in an amusement park funhouse, only to discover the lone tunnel for escape leads directly to the house of horrors. And if a little of one happens to bleed into the other, well, so much the better.

Weiss, who has been at this form of creativity for the past 20 years or so with his partner, Carlos Ricardo Martinez, is a master of theatric hurly-burly. With nightmarish frivolity, his amalgamous theater is practically a showcase for every kind of entertainment ever invented. It borrows the childlike qualities of backyard theater on a makeshift stage. It pilfers from movies, music, television, trashy novels and adolescent escapades. There are hearty doses of incest, racial slurs and anti-feminist remarks. It boasts countless homosexual scenes, yet opinions vary—some believe he writes gay plays while others charge him with homophobia.

And yet it seems like the most real kind of theater, the naturalism heightened and polished until it fairly gleams. Although exhibitionistic, it retains the air of a confessional, with Weiss differentiating between the terms personal and private. And all the while, you can't stop laughing.

"The position I take, because I like an audience to have an experience that is really full, is that I'm not afraid of comedy of the lowest kind. I don't avoid that. And it's sometimes shocking."

Weiss's works range from the harrowing *A Funny Walk Home*—a violent, scary piece about the homecoming of a boy who has spent 15 years in a mental institution—to the futuristic *Pushover: An Oldfashioned Homosexual Mystery Play*, in which anyone who hasn't come out of the closet is assassinated. From *Horsemeat*, the story of a trillionnaire dying because of a nickel festering in his stomach, to *Dark Twist*, which resulted in a kind of Jacobean mass suicide (Weiss had his actors write their own death scenes), to the most recent, *Convergent Lives*, which tells the tale of a zany lady traveling with her brood of relatives and their trials with a Japanese wrestling society. From the compulsive, maniacally energetic monologue that launched his *. . .And That's How The Rent Gets Paid* series to the latest installment, *. . .And That's How The Rent Gets Paid, Part IV: The Confessions of Conrad Gehrhardt*, a 200-scene, semiautobiographical serial about an actor and the adventures of Bjorn Zoltan, a Finnish murderer who may or may not be his double. A Weiss creation, in short, is not another love-in-the-afternoon soap.

The secret to his work is that nothing is sacred on stage, nothing is permanent, and nothing, ultimately, may control. When Weiss wrote in one of his programs that "there's Nazi in all of us. Coming to terms with that is what my life is all about," he wasn't joking.

**Steven Arnold, *Enchantment of Luxor*, 1986,** black and white photograph

"Everyone wants to be excused from cognition. And worse, everyone wants to rule. Call it Nazism, call it fascism, call it slavery, call it whatever you please, it nauseates me."

Weiss has never been known for subtlety, particularly when it comes to his criticism of the so-called avant-garde. Fiercely opinionated about theater companies, per se, he chafes and turns vitriolic.

A company of actors can be deadening. You hear about it being wonderful, communal happiness. Don't believe it. If it's incestuous it usually hangs on perniciously until everyone looks like death. I mean, look at the people in Mabou Mines. There isn't a collection of more unhealthy people on any stage in history. They've all been together for 15 years. It's like looking at a cancer ward. Look at the people from The Living Theater. The insularity of communal theatrical enclaves has never been given the shrift it deserves."

There are those, however, such as Edward Burns who holds a Ph.D. in English and American literature and has been a faithful Weiss watcher for years, who believe the avant-garde became "institutionalized in a vague way. Andrei Serban does theater of emotion. Richard Foreman is about no language—it's all stylization. Robert Wilson is the reduction of all of it to the extreme. Mabou Mines took everything and stylized it. For some, like the Wooster Group, Jeff was a revelation. Their whole thing was total stylization of the avant-garde. They repeat their own stylization. Jeff represents tradition, a tradition of language and emotion. It's vaudeville that he's doing. It's not Artaudian, and it's not Brechtian—in fact, far from it. They weren't intellectualizing at all."

Weiss tends to see the comic and tragic potential of a situation concurrently. As romantic as his plays become, they are also unsentimental. And since his is a theater of language, the words tend to form outrageous, poetic sentences. He doesn't shy away from the inevitableness of actions or untwist a play's pretzel logic into a more palatable ending. The works are occasionally eerie, frequently erotic, and always iconoclastic. Weiss is into effect on stage. For years his ads asked theatergoers to bring flashlights because their East Village space had no electricity. Today, although he's a Con Ed consumer, he makes the same request. Only now, invention has surpassed necessity.

"I want the audience to be able to pick certain things out of the darkness for themselves. There is a random quality about a person with a flashlight. You can single out whatever you wish—you can change the focus. Tired of seeing that face? Turn it on another. Hate what you see on stage? Turn it on someone in the audience."

One of the more appealing theatric elements is Weiss's ability to bend and twist scenes almost at will. In *. . .And That's How The Rent Gets Paid, Part IV,* for instance, he wrote the scene titles on cards and had audience members choose cards at random. Even as the show became more complicated with additional scenes constantly being added, Weiss wouldn't tell the actors which ones would be performed until they arrived at the theater that evening.

Weiss is so good at theatric manipulation that

continued page 82

BARFLY
Barbet Schroeder
One disenchanted evening, Henry (Mickey Rourke) sees Wanda (Faye Dunaway) across a crowded bar. Henry stares at her through his swollen battered eyes and his interest is piqued when a fellow barfly tells him she's crazy. He quickly learns they have a great deal in common: Henry is dedicated to booze, while Wanda is committed to drinking. Each is sinking to a sea of alcohol but they see some thing special in each other that is not at all apparent to the observer.

Wanda lovingly coos: "You're the damndest barfly I've ever met. You're a bluebeard. Royalty." The other barflies see Henry in less romantic terms: "Look what the cat drug in," one announces as Henry enters the bar. After pilfering part of a meal off another's plate, Henry is referred to as "a goddamn seagull, always swooping down on food."

Food and poetry place a distant second to alcohol in Henry's life; he measures survival by the quart. Yet through his alcoholic haze, he has flashes of insight. When offered a writing spot at a mansion, so he "can write in peace," Henry declines, noting: "Nobody worth a damn could ever write in peace."

Charles Bukowski's screenplay is rich with gems like this, but its

single biggest strength is that it's written from the inside out. Its freshness and originality suggest that Bukowski trusted his own instincts, borrowing nothing from other sources. This disarmingly honest warts-and-all material is at once insightful, funny, pathetic and repulsive.

Bob Ziembicki's production design provides a suitable backdrop for the more disgusting elements in the film. Ziembicki astutely complements Henry's slovenly appearance with the seediest room in the most decrepit rooming house, savagely lit with bare bulbs. Henry's pre-War wallpaper has tea-colored streaks and stains, suggesting smoke and urine. A brain-dead refrigerator prevails in the room. One can almost smell the sour odor wafting through the theater.

These pages and previous page: Film stills from *Barfly*, 1987. Direction: Barbet Schroeder

One can almost smell Henry as he lumbers along the street too. His clothes and hair sport months of filth and sediment. His drinking is constantly punctuated by alley brawls, and one is always reminded of these bloody encounters by Henry's blackened scabby knuckles.

Rourke lends dignity and pathos to Henry, who has a general obliviousness to the world outside bars. His ape-like posture and movements, and his bull-dog jaw, contribute to a highly stylized and mannered performance. Rourke's interpretation promises to be as controversial as Marlon Brando's Don Corleone in *The Godfather*.

Rourke, Dunaway and each of *Barfly*'s other key elements are

strong, but the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Barbet Schroeder's direction harmoniously interacts with Robby Muller's photography and Eva Gardos' editing. The subordinate performances add as much to atmosphere as story and characterization. In fact, the extras populating the bars are real life barflies who had reluctantly to drink fake beer and bourbon-colored water.

Like *Sid and Nancy*, *Barfly* speaks authentically about substance abuse and distorted perceptions; and how relationships in an open-ended, guileless world manage ironically to purge society's cues and expectations. In one scene, Wanda tells Henry she cannot fall in love and isn't ready for a commitment. Henry reassures her with: "That's OK, nobody's loved me yet."

What do a moth and a whale have in common with a wolf, a dove, a dragon and a unicorn? They can be found, along with thirteen other beasts real and imaginary, between the covers of *The Scottish Bestiary*, published recently in limited edition by The Paragon Press, London. Hailed in Britain as "one of the most important printmaking ventures of the century," *The Scottish Bestiary* has been painstakingly produced in the classical medieval tradition, but is totally contemporary in texture and tone, comprising etchings, lithographs, screenprints, and woodcuts by seven of Scotland's most up-and-coming artists and a prose/poetry text by the venerable George Mackay Brown, O.B.E., who lives in the Orkney Islands.

Founder of The Paragon Press, Charles Booth-Clibborn was studying medieval history at Edinburgh University last year when the idea of producing *The Scottish Bestiary* first occurred to him. Earlier, he and a couple of school friends had successfully organized 'New Art New World,' an exhibition of contemporary art auctioned simultaneously at Christie's in London and New York, raising nearly a quarter-million dollars for charity.

Booth-Clibborn had met a lot of artists in the process, and for some time had "longed to produce and publish a monument in book-art form, of international importance and interest." Why not a bestiary—a modern version of the illustrated fables so popular in the Middle Ages? And, given the influence of beasts upon Scotland's art and literature—from Robert the Bruce's legendary spider to the dreaded nuckelavee, "Devil of the Sea,"—why not a Scottish bestiary?

His exams completed, Booth-Clibborn set up shop in the kitchen of his

## THE SCOTTISH BESTIARY

**Mary Nell McCann**

mother's house in London, "with zero capital, just a typewriter and a telephone." Author and artists contacted were enthusiastic enough about the project to defer payment, and *The Scottish Bestiary* was born.

The artists—John Bellany, Steven Campbell, Peter Howson, Jack Knox, Bruce McLean, June Redfern, and Adrian Wiszniewski—were given free rein in their interpretation of George Mackay Brown's text: a few actually followed the script. The result is a collection bristling with assertion, vitality, and an occasional wee touch of Scottish eccentricity.

"It was a beautiful collaboration," says Booth-Clibborn, "between author, artists, printer, designer, and publisher—although coordination, at times, was a bit difficult.

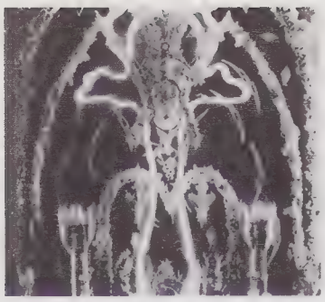
I was told by printers in London that the project would take two years. But that simply wasn't on, as far as I was concerned. I scouted around, and finally found a printer in Cumbria who could handle the text in the size and style I wanted, on an Albion press c. 1870. The Peacock Press up in Aberdeen did the prints, brilliantly. There was a lot of screaming and shouting, but we got the project out in less than six months."

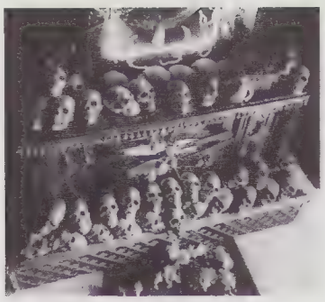
Sales have been agreeably brisk. Buyers of the bestiary to date include some of the most renowned museums and libraries in England, Scotland and the U.S. Charles Booth-Clibborn, however, isn't quite satisfied. He would like to see his bestiary gracing the coffee tables of more private American collectors, "where it can be seen more closely, and, perhaps, be more widely appreciated." It takes a whale of a coffee table to accommodate *The Scottish Bestiary*: the portfolio of prints measures 22″ x 30″ and costs $6,000. The book, slightly less leviathan at 15″ x 22″, goes for $3,000. Booth-Clibborn makes no apologies for the price tag. "The Bestiary is a unique monument to Scottish artistic achievement."

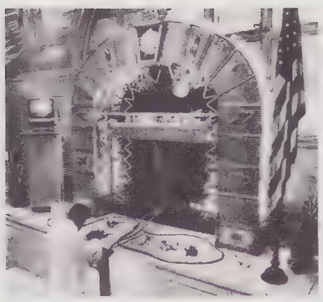
Above: **Peter Howson, *The Fieldmouse,*** twelve-colour screenprint **Adrian Wiszniewski, *The Unicorn,*** etching. **John Bellany, *The Grouse Capercaillie,*** etching **Adrian Wiszniewski, *The Dragon,*** lithograph.

# WEST COAST FANTASTS

Chiori Santiago







Religion as synonymous with capitalism is a recurring theme among social surrealists, and it's evident from Lee Roy Champagne's pieces that he enjoys exploring this idea with a disciple's enthusiasm. Champagne constructs magnificent altars of what he calls "mundane media"—dolls, plastic posies and other found objects.

For a few weeks, during the summer of 1986, artists Jeff Stoll and Jo Babcock's *Hotel Project* transformed a decrepit West Oakland hotel into a multi-unit installation gallery. Around a dark corner loomed the *Chapel Champagne*, a full-scale homage to the religion of war. Above a row of pink skulls, *Chapel Champagne* rose, encrusted with plastic geegaws, thick with paint, spitting sparks of neon light and groaning from hidden speakers.

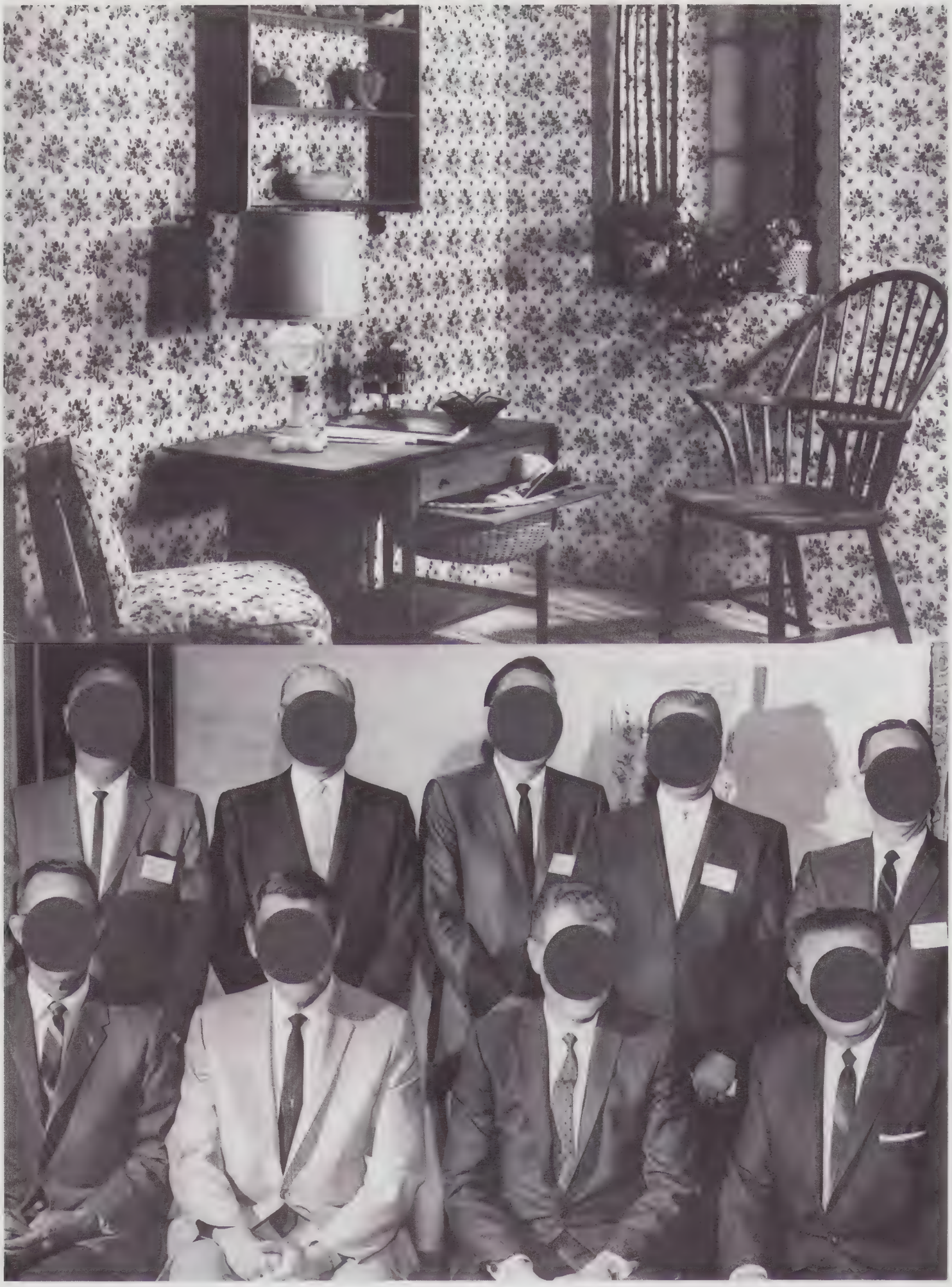
Champagne's delightful iconoclasm captures the fascination for materials that prompted creation of the "surrealist objects" by Dali and Miro, and the fascination with violence of form in Hans Bellmer's *Poupee*. Yet his intent is to convey a message beyond the interpretation of random objects. His *Mass Produced Series* of 14 small altars, for example, is built upon coin-operated vending machines in obvious juxtaposition to religious artifacts. It is adorned with cut-glass ornaments. Faith, he seems to say, comes cheap.

Larger, more involved pieces such as *Kali, the Contemporary*, make a further connection between God and war. This temple to the blood-thirsty Hindu goddess, who is often depicted with a necklace of human heads, holds a row of golden cherubs caught in rat traps. Totems of devils' heads teem with glued-on remnants of plastic babies. The goddess figure is enveloped by a mushroom cloud of gleaming neon light.

As if to step out of all this externalized anguish comes Sha Sha Higby, a performer who draws upon a spiritual wellspring to inspire her dances and intricate costumes. The costumes themselves are a wonderment. The mask for her *Moon Puppet* performance is a head-size porcelain egg, shaded in earthen hues, with a halo of beads, shells and feathers. The placement of each adornment echoes the thought in the artist's hand at the moment of their making. The robe she wears in *Cows Under a Pepper Tree* is an engineering fantasy of hand-painted fabric forms that shingle over her body, held together with silk cord and bead-strings.

To the accompaniment of drums or synthesizer or the sparse sound of rice dropped on wood, Higby begins her performance by slowly unfolding from her posture on the floor. With each movement she metamorphoses into another creature, another organic form, until at last she sheds the trappings of her costume to "uncover plain energy." The fine construction of ceramic and cloth lies limp on the floor. The emergence of her nude form is for Higby the most significant part of the piece, revealing the essence of "what is common to all."

Top left and center: **Lee Roy Champagne, *Kali—The Contemporary*, 1983,** mixed media. Installation views. Lower left: **Lee Roy Champagne, *Chapel Champagne*, 1984,** mixed media. Installation view. Right: **Sha Sha Higby, *Cows Under a Pepper Tree*, 1986,** performance view



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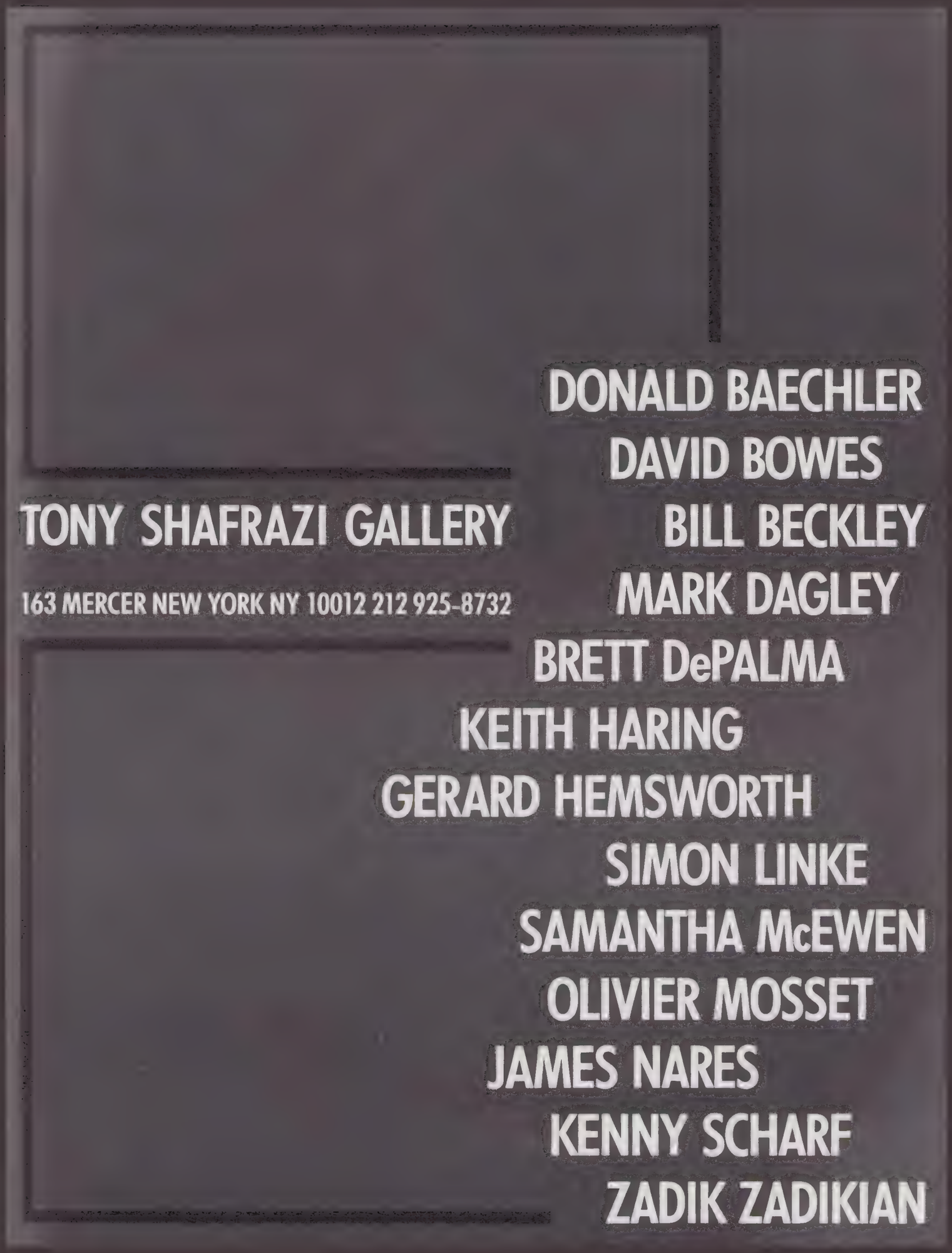
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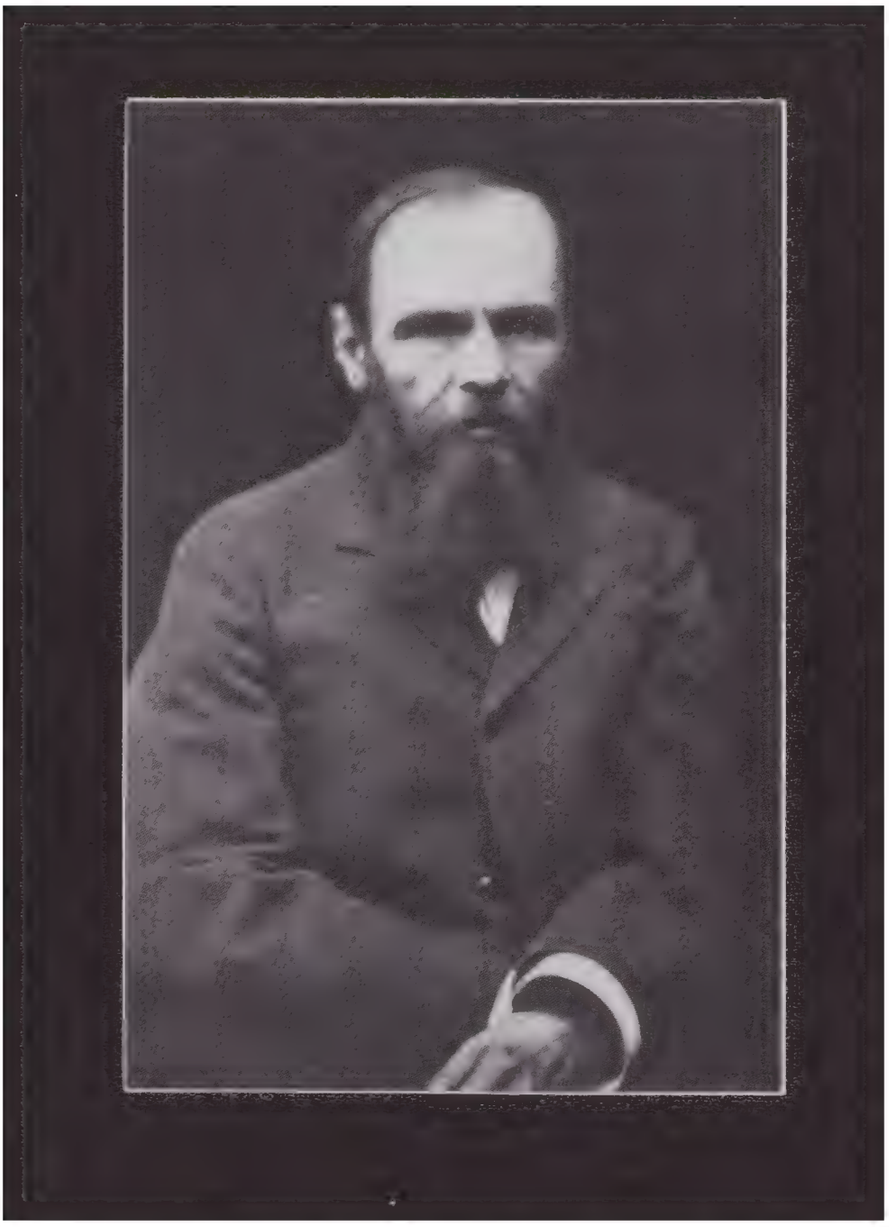


# BRUCE WEBER

*Bram Triest-Coates*

*BRAM TRIEST-COATES: How was* Broken Noses *conceived?*

BRUCE WEBER: Well, it started in the summer of 1983 at the Colorado Sports Festival. I was photographing all the young athletes who had a chance to go to the Olympics. We had photographed a boxer named Nathan Houser, and he wanted to show off his body so he chose to wear a very small bathing suit. This got back to the boxing federation; Nathan told them that we forced him to wear it. We were then banned from photographing the rest of the Olympic boxing team. Then one day a lightweight boxer, Andy Minsker, came to be photographed. We asked him why he came, and he said, "They told me that I was forbidden to come to meet you. They said that you'd give me a weird haircut and make me wear skimpy see-through clothes, and who knows what else you'd do to me, and I thought, that's all I needed to hear. I'm on my way." We got to know him, and throughout the whole time he was telling me about this boxing club he had up in Portland. And I wanted a record of this, since I knew that Andy was growing up and that boxing was a really destructive thing. Really, I made the film for myself. It all just sort of happened. We got a small crew together since we didn't have much money. We shot it in black and white and color, on 16 millimeter, sometimes we even did 8 millimeter because we ran out of film and couldn't get it. We just shot whatever we were feeling at the time. Basically, I wanted a scrapbook effect.

*BT: Is that why it is referred to as an "experimental" film?*

BW: Well, I don't like to put a label on it. When I showed the film in Cannes out of competition last spring, people were asking "What is it? Is it an adventure? A comedy?" And I said, well, it's a movie.

*BT: People need to put everything in its proper slot. But when you label yourself you limit yourself.*

BW: Yes, like people come up to me and say "What kind of picture is that? That's not a *fashion* picture! People are nude! They don't have any clothes on." Or, "That's a picture of a dog! How can that be a fashion picture?" And I always think some of the best fashion photographs are like the pictures in the newspaper. People leaving court, getting arrested, getting an award . . .

*BT: You're stilll working on your Chet Baker film,* Blame It On My Youth*?*

BW: Yes. I'm still editing it.

*BT: What has inspired you to make films?*

BW: I was always really inspired by the early Italian cinema. It opened my eyes about seeing things in a certain way. All the early Rossellini movies, Visconti . . . I really loved those films a lot, and I got to see them when I was quite young. They had a lasting impression on me. It's really what has made me want to take photographs, too.

*BT: You studied both film and photography in school.*

BW: I studied film at NYU. I studied photography at the New School, with Lisett Model.

*BT: Do you feel your training was very important as a photographer and as a director?*

BW: I think it's nice to know what you appreciate. To know what you like. It's important because working is so discouraging sometimes, it's so upsetting. You have to fight, and go through certain traumas, to get a certain thing the way you feel. If you don't know what you like you're really in trouble. It's funny, I've always admired other filmmakers and other photographers, even if I didn't like their work, if they had a definite way in which they saw things. I've always admired them if they had something they believed in.

*BT: What specific photographers and directors have influenced you?*

BW: I'm a huge fan of John Ford's movies. And George Stevens.

*BT: And photographers?*

BW: I love photography so much, I like the photographic image so much, I like a wide range of photographers. I like August Sander, he's one of my favorites. Edward Weston, too.

*BT: Are you a perfectionist? Is work a difficult process for you?*

BW: I think the difficult process is being able to wake up and have the courage every day, and not to let a lot of other things get in your way of doing the work. I see so many other photographers, and they are so interested in being seen in the right restaurants, having the prettiest girlfriend or boyfriend, and being known, being noticed on the street. I always felt that was sort of nowhere. Your work shouldn't be judged on how you're personally accepted. There are so many great photographers who have inspired me that very few people know of. I have a friend, Louise Serpa, who is the only woman photographer credited in the rodeo association. She and her daughters, who are also photographers, travel around in a big station wagon to all the rodeos, and photograph the cowboys. They charge about $25 a photograph, and they do these great rodeo pictures. They're having a great time at it. But when somebody young comes to me and says, "Oh, you know, I just can't *wait* to work for this magazine!" or "*How* did you get that job?" I look at them and think, my God, it's such a wrong direction, with that attitude! Louise came to me the other day and said, "I got a job! A real job! Somebody wants to pay me more than $25 for a photograph!" And I thought, this could never have happened if she hadn't believed in what she was doing. It's like Imogen Cunningham. She was very old before people wanted to buy her photographs. It's funny, there isn't a day that goes by that I don't read about it or somebody tells me personally how much they hate my photographs.

*BT: Really?*

BW: I say to myself, boy, I'm really glad I believe in what I'm doing. I think that's so important, because a lot of young photographers feel their work is being judged by their success. Some of the best photographers I know do it just because they love it.

*BT: Do the things people say about your work affect you very much?*

BW: Yes. I can go into complete depression.

*BT: What do they say?*

BW: They say the funniest things. They say the pictures are really terrible.

*BT: Do they say why?*

BW: I think a lot of people really get offended by the photographs of men. They get really frightened by it. They get nervous.

*BT: Has any particular body of work or any particular shot gotten a more negative reaction?*

BW: The most negative reactions I ever got were from a series of early pictures that I had done for the Soho News, of Jeff Aquilon.

*BT: Have the Obsession ads been very controversial?*

BW: I really don't hear much about the controversy. I travel a lot, and most of the towns I go to, the people have never even seen those ads. I spent some time last fall up in Montana, and photographed all these kids on the farm, and they don't know about those ads, you know? They judge you by what you do that day.

*BT: Many people believe that you changed the direction of fashion photography. That you brought a new concept to the way it was conceived and executed.*

BW: That's a pretty serious thing. I don't know if I can live up to that.

*BT: It goes back to not labeling things. You don't impose any limitations on your work, like "this is a fashion shot, this is this kind of shot . . . " You just do your work. Most people say, "Now I'm doing fashion, and I have to do this . . . "*

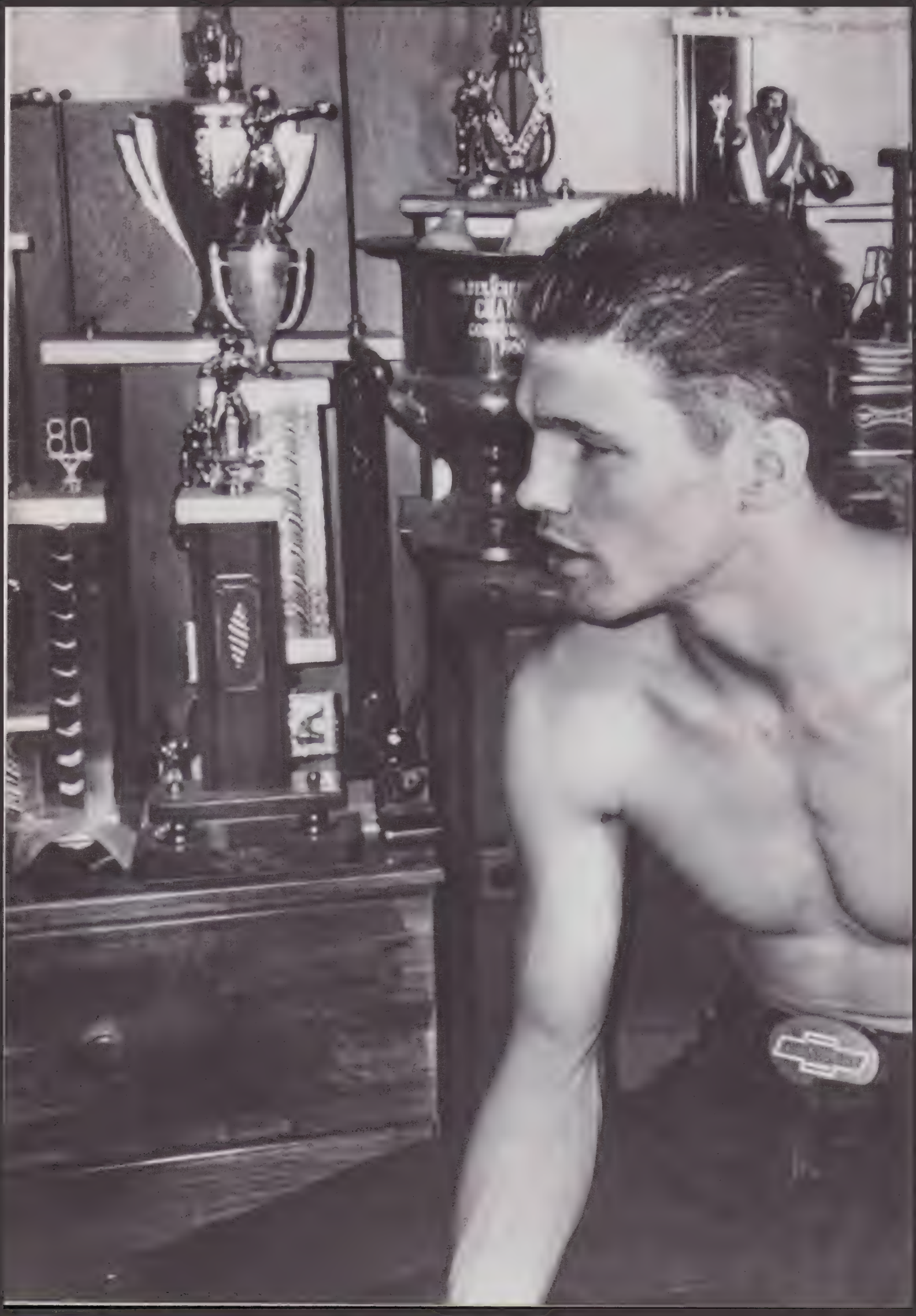
BW: It relates to the question you asked about my early training. I think it really did help because I saw things that really inspired me, and it made me say, "Wait—I'm seeing that differently, but I really like what I see." You know, I love all those pictures that Edward Weston did, like those family photographs, photographs of his son . . . I love the pictures that Imogen Cunningham did of her sons, and I love the photographs that she did of her husband—those nudes that were very scandalous. To me, those photographs were extraordinary fashion pictures. Some of Edward Weston's photographs are the most modern fashion pictures ever taken. Fifty years from now they'll still be modern. It's all about fashion to me. I know my view of that is a little distorted, but it's the only way I can see it.

*BT: Do you think your work will endure as much as theirs?*

BW: I don't really care so much about that as I care that it really inspires other people to take photographs or make films. That's always the greatest compliment; that somebody gets some kind of release from looking at one of my pictures.

*BT: One hundred years from now, when people look back on your work as a reflection of this time, what will they say or think?*

OREGON
USA ABF
Andrew
Moinsker
CANNES



BW: Boy, was that guy out of it. I don't know. I can't answer that realistically. I don't really like to think of my work like that. I like to think that I'll be in an exhibition somewhere, and they'll say, "I really like your work a lot. I'm going to school, studying photography, and I want to take photographs." I always think of some things Richard Burton once said to me: "Why do you want to do *that*? Well, why do you want to do *that*?"

*BT: Why do you want to do that?*

BW: I don't know, I get a chance to look at an image, and I think, well, that would be fun. I think the photographic sense is a very momentary thing, and that's what is fun about it. Because you're always photographing what is going on in your own life. Whether it's a fashion picture, a still life, or a room. You're photographing what is going on in your home, in your house, in your mind. That's what I loved so much making this film about a boxer, because it's really my life. And the same with Chet's film.

*BT: How was* Broken Noses *received in Cannes?*

BW: The people were very nice to me about it. I think they were really sensitive to the fact that it's my first film. They were really supportive. People from a lot of countries that I felt wouldn't be interested in that kind of film liked it.

*BT: What countries?*

BW: Yugoslavia, those kind of countries.

*BT: How do the Europeans feel about your photography? They don't share the same American ideal of beauty.*

BW: I feel that my work has been much more accepted in Europe than it ever was in America. They were much more accepting of what I was trying to do.

*BT: Do you feel the American ideal of beauty is changing?*

BW: I hope so. I really hope so.

*BT: I like the European ideal; it's more gutsy and hearty. There is less emphasis on the body beautiful and more emphasis on personality.*

BW: When I was 16 I hung out on a lot of the beaches on the East Coast. All of my friends were surfed out, in East Coast style, and they all had good bodies. I wasn't a good athlete, but they were. But what I really loved was seeing these early Italian movies, seeing someone like Anna Magnani, when she'd take her dress off and her body was round . . . she was so attractive, and so right over the edge, you know. I found it so appealing to see Marcello Mastroianni, when he'd take his sunglasses off and he had all these dark circles under his eyes. I thought that was really great. I would see these August Sander photographs, they'd be really, really skinny. I like that. People think that I just like photographing people with great bodies, but it's not so. What has been fun about making these movies is that I've been able to explore that more. Some of the girls in Chet's film, the jazz groupies, they're very voluptuous. Now when I see those other kind of girls or if I'm forced to photograph that other kind of girl, I don't find that too inspiring. I'll have the hairdresser cut her hair like Jean Seberg. Or I'll have her cut her hair herself. Or I'll want her to stay up all night the night before, and maybe have circles under her eyes. When I was in Montana, we met a really beautiful American Indian girl, her name was Jackie Coyote. She had very long dark hair and a very large hook nose. She looked just like an illustration to me. Most people would not think she was conventionally beautiful but, to me, she was very ex-

citing. You could photograph anything on her, from sports clothes to couture. I think people who wear jackets the best are farm boys. They wear suits and stuff the best.

*BT: Many people feel that the value system of the country will change to emphasizing minds over bodies. That's encouraging.*

BW: Definitely. I think it's important that people are healthy and stay in good shape, but more out of the love of doing it through sports or work. It's much more attractive. Nothing is worse than to meet a guy or a girl who has a great body but doesn't have a brain in their head.

*BT: What qualities most intrigue you in a subject?*

BW: I like people who take a lot of chances.

*BT: Do you select most of your models from people that you meet?*

BW: Most of the time they're usually friends. They're sometimes with an agency. Sometimes they're actors, or athletes. Sometimes I really don't know them until I meet them. When we were in Paris, I was in a hotel room photographing a racecar driver, Paul Belmondo, Jr. The waiter came in, and he looked like all those young guys in the French resistance. He had that midnight black hair, and his eyes had the deepest circles, like he had drawn kohl on them. He had this big broken nose, and this great mouth. And I stopped shooting, and said, oh, my God, we've got to photograph this guy! So we photographed the waiter.

*BT: In the early '80s, your work began to slowly be accepted as art. In the past four years, you've had eight one man shows. This year, your were included in the Whitney Biennial. How does all this affect you?*

BW: I never really got involved in what the outcome of the photographs are, or how they are going to be received. I really just get involved in the work. I didn't think, wow, I'm going to be able to sell my photographs. I really thought of it as, in a strange way, going to school. And I think that's the only reason to do exhibitions, because it's like going to school and taking a test. I don't make distinctions with my work, whether it's art or it's commercial.

*BT: What did you photograph before you began with fashion?*

BW: I started photographing musicians. My sister was in the music business, and she worked for David Bowie and a few other rock groups. Frank Zappa, and people like that. I traveled around Europe, I lived in Paris for a little while.

*BT: Then you started fashion work in New York?*

BW: Yes. My first fashion photographs to be published, after some early things in New York, were in British *Vogue*.

*BT: Do you photograph every day?*

BW: Sometimes I have to force myself. I was photographing Andrew Wyeth once and the thing that I loved about him most was that he paints every day, even Christmas morning. I thought that was pretty amazing.

*BT: He was quite busy with those Helga things.*

BW: I see a photographer like Horst, who is in his 80s, and he really has a good life, he drinks, he smokes; he has a lot of romance in his life, and he takes pictures about 4 or 5 times a week. I think that's pretty great.

*BT: How many photographs do you take, on the average, before you get a good one?*

BW: I don't know. Sometimes just a few.

*BT: Your approach is more intuitive than analytical, so you don't think about composition a lot.*

BW: Yes.

*BT: Is film composition much more difficult to arrange?*

BW: It's trickier. The shape of the frame and what happens within it are different. Sometimes the scene can have a lot of content in it, but you don't like the shape. It's interesting to make the two happen at the same time.

*BT: When you're photographing, and you have a shot with several people, do you give them the freedom to interact among themselves, or are the dynamics of the situation arranged much more by you?*

BW: It depends. It depends on who I'm photographing. It depends on how much they relate to each other.

*BT:Is it more difficult to photograph nude models than clothed ones?*

BW: I think so, definitely. You always have to have a lot of respect for these people, whoever you photograph, and if you don't, it's always very difficult. Also in terms of the shape of the body, and what you really want from it, what your intentions are in the photograph, how you feel you want the photograph to be . . . and sometimes you don't even have time to think about that stuff, you know?

*BT: Has any of your work ever been censored?*

BW: Yes, in Italy. A whole series of pictures I did of guys on leave in Waikiki. And also a whole series of pictures of boys on their girlfriends' beds.

*BT: But basically, the Americans have more of a problem with the sexuality in your photographs than the Europeans?*

BW: I never really get involved in all that controversy. You know, they have this lifestyle picture of me as this really wild guy, and my whole crew is really wild, and we're really high and we're making it and all this, and it's hardly the case. These people are my friends, and they're people I really like. That's not our scene at all. I mean, we can only do those kind of pictures because we're so square, really. It comes out of trust. When I'm taking a picture of someone, I have more of an obligation to them than to the people seeing the pictures.

*BT: Your work portrays a more wholesome aspect of sex, a wonderment and pride about the human body. It's innocent. It's sexual but it's an innocent sexuality.*

BW: Yes. People say, "Oh, you have these three people laying down in an ad you did for Calvin Klein, and . . . it's a threesome and . . ." I mean, they all fell asleep! I was photographing somebody else and I turned around and thought, oh how childlike, how beautiful, these kids were swimming on the beach and they all fell asleep together. That's what it reminded me of. I was really photographing a lot of that from my experiences living up in Martha's Vineyard for the summer and there was a really great beach where everyone would be nude, and it was hardly a sexual thing.

*BT: The only controversy I've heard about was from the early Obsession ads. Magazines were banned . . .*

BW: Yeah. I think the really dangerous thing is when you can't look at something. I think that now there are very few things that I'm afraid to look at.

# THE STARN TWINS

*Joseph Jacobs*

Some of the most powerful art being produced today is coming from the Boston studio of Doug and Mike Starn, twenty-six year old identical twins who collaborate to make mixed-media works that can loosely be described as photographs in the sense that photographs are the foundation of their work. Whether small at 8 × 10 inches, or large at 5 × 8 feet, their photographs pack tremendous energy. Even such tranquil subjects as a dead Christ in repose, a close-up of rolling waves in an endless sea, or an imageless collage of over-exposed black prints bristle with tension. Almost without exception, their work is unsettling, compelling and mysterious, and this disconcerting aura is accomplished without any of the gimmicks that seem to characterize so much contemporary art, which relies on sensational subject matter or histrionic technique. To the contrary, the power in their work is latent; it is not immediately apparent, and instead seems to lie beneath the surface, about to erupt. In many instances, the subject may seem ordinary, such as a cat, a horse, or a chair, but these objects seem possessed by an intense force.

The familiarity of so much of the Starns' imagery and technique is in part the element that makes their art so potent, for we are lulled into a false sense of comfort when we first encounter their work. Since their first mature pieces in 1985, the Starns have scratched their negatives and stained, creased, folded, torn and taped together their prints, thus giving their pieces a vintage aura that is not belied by their timeless imagery. These works make us feel as though we were in the presence of 19th century photographs that have suffered the ravages of time. The fact that many of the prints are toned, a technique more common to the first seventy-five years of photography than the last seventy-five, only adds to our belief that the Starns are presenting us with found or discovered "objects" that they have flattened out or pieced back together with Scotch tape.

But despite the familiarity of the work, the image in a Starns' photograph is never comforting, the way a landscape by Francis Frith is, or a portrait by Julia Margaret Cameron, or a building or street scene by Eugene Atget. There is generally something wrong in a Starn photograph, although this something is rarely apparent. A sea is in a constant state of swelling and swaying, as in *Seascape* (1985-86), a horse's head is brutally cropped and dominated by prickly hair, as in *Luther* (1985-87), or, the image disappears altogether due to the over-exposure in the printing process, leaving us with a haunting black nothingness, as in *Black Piece* (1987).

*Place St. Michel* (1986) is a wonderful example of the deception of the Starns' imagery. If seen illustrated in a magazine or book, this sepia-toned photograph of a gargoyle in Paris' Place St. Michel could almost be mistaken for a turn-of-the-century documentation print by Atget of the rapidly disappearing world of France's *ancien regime*. But if Atget sought out the charming and picturesque, the Starns gravitated toward the disturbing, uncovering it where it hardly existed. Their stone gargoyle threatens as it opens its mouth, digs in with its powerful legs and pointed talons, and thrusts its dark sharp wings back and up into the air. Shot from below to accentuate its bulk and presence, the monster is silhouetted against a screen of houses, whose architectural details—especially the windows—have a piercing verticality that echoes and thus reinforces the stridency of the gargoyle's talons, wings and teeth. Thoroughly removing the photograph from a 19th century context are the nine-foot scale of the work, which inflates the gargoyle to monumental proportions, and the piecing together of many prints with Scotch tape, which causes the underlying image to blur and seemingly to vibrate.

The tension in the Starns' work is reinforced by this struggle between the image and the medium, that is, between the tape and the tearing of the prints on the one hand and the gargoyle and the buildings on the other. A sense of removal and distancing prevails as the image gets buried beneath the physicality of the process, which can include not only the rips and creases of the paper and the overlay of Scotch tape, but also overwhelming elaborate hand-made or found frames and, in the more recent work, the constructivist application of metal and wood elements over and around the prints. These materials have a reality and presence that remind us that the photograph is, in effect, just a vestige of a former reality. At times, a portion of an image actually disappears altogether, not only due to the collaging of other materials on the paper, but because the print itself is over-exposed and toned to a single color. At other times, the entire image disappears, as in *Black Piece*, which began as a landscape. But because of over-exposure, all that is left is a frenzied swirl of tape and paper and a lugubrious emptiness that begs to be read as a symbol for the infinite, and not just as an excercise in abstraction.

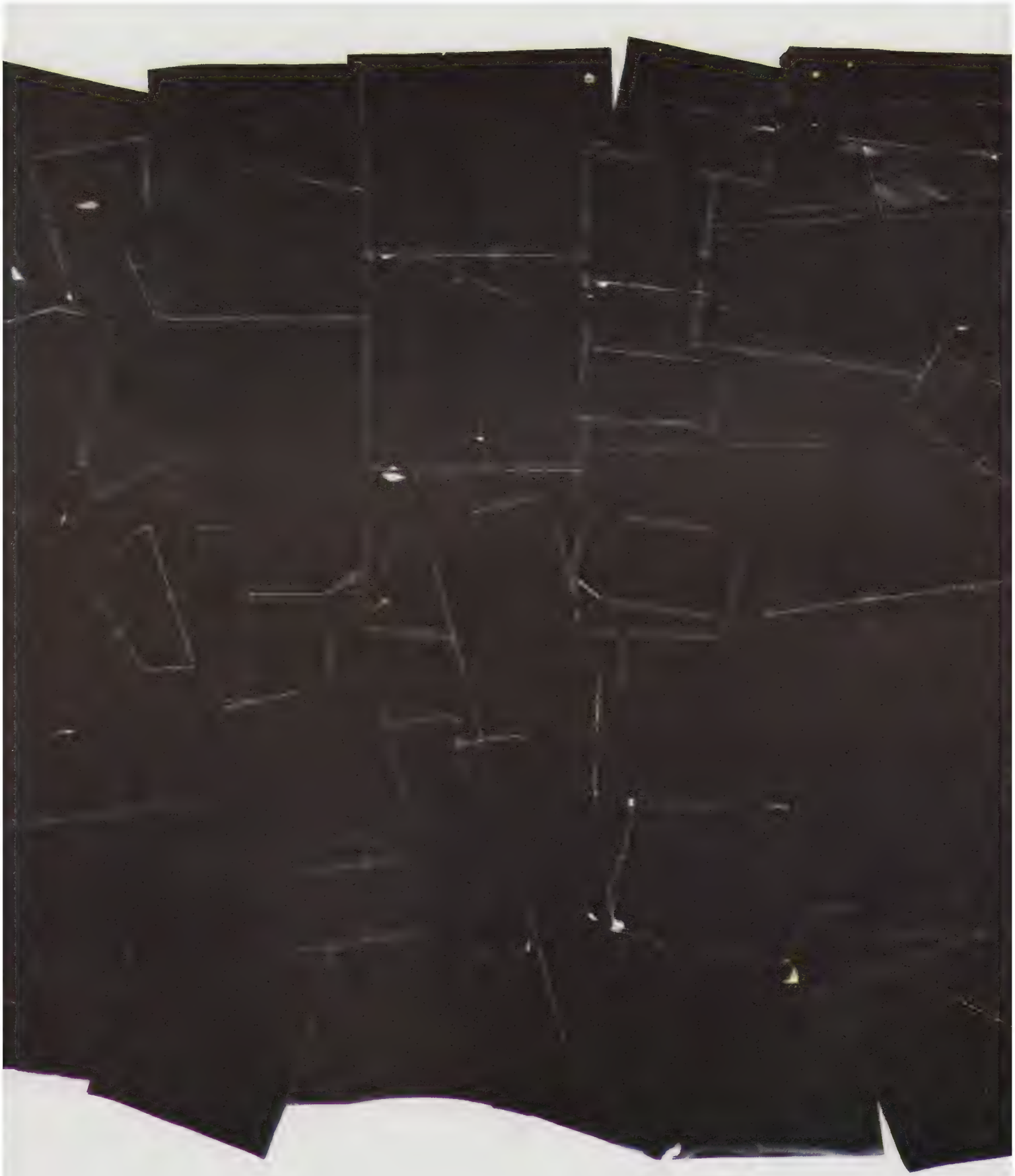
But it is the sheer beauty of the Starns' work, the artists' ability to execute the formalist exercise so well, that in part makes their photographs so appealing. Their feeling for how to develop a textured surface is second to none, and despite different aesthetic interests and the use of different materials, we cannot help but compare the quality of their poetic manipulation of mixed media to that of Robert Rauschenberg's best combine pieces from the fifties. As deft as their sense of texture is the Starns' sense of composition, scale and proportion, which favors playing a calculated cubist or constructivist geometry off of the seemingly-wanton patterning of the crumpling, tearing and folding of the photographic paper. Their feeling for composition even extends to the precious placement of their works in installations and to making a single work out of several framed components, which, like their installations, are carefully arranged on the wall.

Despite the beauty of the formalist play, we never sense that it is an idle exercise, executed for its own sake. Rather, the abstraction thematically affects the image, as in *Terrace Jeu de Paume* (1985-87), where the physical presence of the burgundy prints on the right represents the final stage in the progressive disappearance of the human being, an evolution that began with the human represented as a stone sculpture, then as a photographic image of the sculpture, and lastly as a very real eternal nothingness of the abstract side to the diptych. Tension abounds between image and abstraction, transforming a view of a statue into a disquietingly powerful statement on life.

As potent is the tension generated by the contrast between the illusion of the image and the physical reality of the textured surface. Such foreign objects as tape, wood and metal that are attached to or are surrounding the prints have a physical presence that represses the image. Even the paper has a physicality that is at odds with the illusion, for its smooth taut surface has been ruptured by the tearing and creasing. The surface of the photograph no longer functions like a window through which we see a "scene." Since the invention of photography, the magic of the medium to a large degree lay in its ability to convince us that it had preserved a moment in time. And when we look intently at a photograph, we often find ourselves immersed in the scene represented, to the point that we forget we are only looking at a photograph and lose awareness of our own presence and that of the room we are in. We are mentally transported, albeit temporarily, to the world of the photograph. But in a Starns' print, the illusion struggles to exist. The medium has the greater reality, and by calling so much attention to the reality of the medium, the artificiality of the image is exposed. The subject is distanced from us, or the reality of the original scene that was recorded by the camera is *further* removed if we think of the first step in the removal process as the transfer of the real scene to a photographic print.

The Starns further distance the image by fragment-

This page and next: ***Black Piece*, 1987,** toned silver print and scotch tape, 45 × 120 in. Saatchi Collection, London

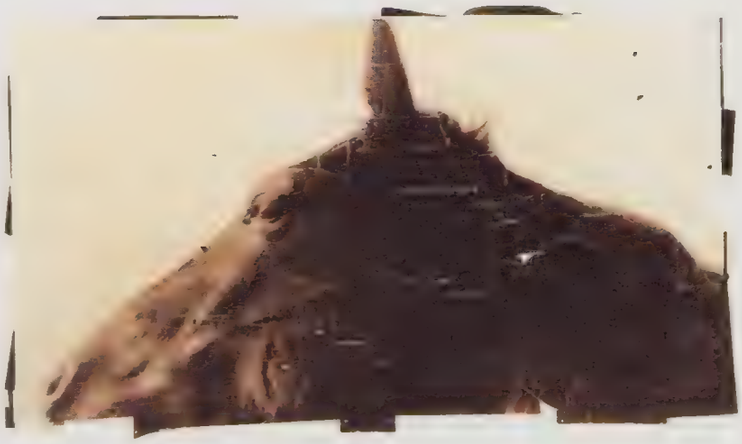


ing it. A single work is generally made up of many prints taped together, and even when the prints are aligned almost perfectly so as to allow for a relatively continuous reading of the scene—which is not necessarily an objective for the artists—the underlying image is never that seamless. To the contrary, the Starns emphasize the edge of the paper. The Scotch tape highlights the shape of each individual print, although even without the tape the edges would be apparent since prints are often toned darker or lighter than adjoining prints, or they are toned an altogether different color. The geometric pattern of the prints runs through, and thus works against, the image. The Starns' works are a photographic version of Cubism, with the geometric patterning of the individual sheets of photographic paper fracturing and distancing the underlying "picture" in much the same way that the lambent planes of an analytic cubist painting veil and jostle a representational world that supposedly lies beneath. But, of course, the world denied by the geometric patterning in a Starns' photograph was at one time a real world, and not an illusionistic one, as is the case in a painting. This is no small distinction, since it is this melting away of reality that makes the Starns' work so compelling.

On occasion the geometry in a work extends beyond the patterning of the photographic paper to the very image itself, as the Starns, using the same negative, repeat a subject countless times, as in *Mark Morrisoe with Chair* (1985-87). Here, the artists use seriality to render their subject "meaningless," as the image of their friend is reduced to nothing more than a shape when it is repeated some seventy times to form a pattern across the surface of the work. But suddenly the sitter takes on meaning once again when a single, larger image of a chair is injected into this seriality, for we cannot help but feel that a dialogue takes place between the two subjects, although there is no clue as to how we are to interpret their relationship, other than to read it as a formal, abstract one.

On occasion, the Starns pilfer their images from other media, which also has the effect of distancing the subject. For example, the head which is repeated thirty times in *Thirty* (1985-86) was shot from a television, so that we have a subject that has been progressively distorted as it has traveled through a series of lens and screens—from the television camera, to a television, through a camera lens and finally through the darkroom enlarger onto photographic paper, where it is further hidden beneath the rips, creases and folds on the surface. Unlike most appropriation art, the issue in *Thirty* is not so much the concept of originality in art or how works of art change meaning when their context changes. The seriality in the piece, that rote repetition of a blurred head that reduces the subject to a surface design, makes it clear that appropriation for the Starns is more about distancing. This is certainly true of their *Christ (Stretched)* (1985-86), the sensation of their first best known piece, which is an "appropriation" of a Phillipe de Champaigne painting in the Louvre. And, yet, it is not so crucial that we know that the source was a 17th century French painting. What matters is Christ has been distanced from us, first via the medium of oil on canvas, and then through photography. Our view of Christ is further distorted by the piecing together of the image, and especially in a way that extends the recumbant figure to unseemly lengths.

***Seascape* (Detail), 1985-86,** toned silver print and scotch tape, 60 × 70 in. Collection Alan Hergott.



***Luther*, 1985-87,** toned silver print and scotch tape, 48 × 96 in. Private Collection.

***Place St. Michel with Plexi and Lead*, 1987,** toned silver print, scotch tape, wood, lead, glue, 108 × 84 in. Saatchi Collection, London.

***Terrace Jeu de Paume*, 1985-87**, toned silver print and scotch tape, 92 × 96 in. Collection Randolfo Rocha.

***Triple Christ*, 1985-86,** toned silver print and scotch tape, 65 × 65 in. Collection Randolfo Rocha.

***Vertical Christ With Black*, 1985-87,** toned silver print and scotch tape, 94 × 100 in. Private Collection, Switzerland.

***Ian*, 1986-87,** toned silver print and scotch tape, 84 × 84 in.

Seriality and appropriation certainly are not methods of working that are unique to the Starns. They are, in fact, among the last of the assault troops to scale the wall of modernist photography, an attack that had begun some twenty years earlier in the mid-60s. Not only had serialization and appropriation become traditional modern practices by the mid-80s with many artists working with the camera, but working on a large scale, collaging photographs, arranging a group of framed photographs to make a single work, painting on photographs or putting other foreign objects on photographs, and integratng photographs into other mediums had become standard procedure in many circles. Such artists as Les Levine, Sherrie Levine, Jan Dibbets, Ger van Elk, Anselm Kiefer, Gordon Matta-Clark, Roger Cutforth, Janet Rifkin, David Hockney, and Sigmar Polke have to varying degrees dealt with these issues. Even the Starns' device of collaging the negatives onto their pieces had precedents in the work of William Childress and Ugo Mulas among others. The sole property of the Starns seems to be the abusing of the print through folding, crumpling and tearing, although forerunners can probably be found for this technique as well.

What is at issue in the Starns' work is not their unconventional approach to the use of photography, because in most respects it is not that unconventional, at least not for 1987. Of far greater interest is the richness of their technique, the fact that they use *so many* devices. Their ouevre is virtually a dictionary for the new photography. Coming from a conservative art school in Boston where the traditional values of modern art photography were imposed upon them, the Starns naturally reacted by thoroughly exploring the medium to find out how many ways there were to step outside of the photographic canons taught in the classroom.

But most important, and the real issue in their work, is the personal stamp they put on the new photography. It is the fact that they bring to their technique selection a sensitivity that not only justifies their means but injects it with potent meaning. We never sense an empty gesture in their work. They arrived at their aesthetic and technical conclusions out of need and not because they turned to any prototypes. We do not feel David Hockney or Gilbert & George as residing behind their making a single work out of many prints pieced together (not to mention the Starns' technique is completely different from that of these predecessors), or Allan McCollum behind their arranging several framed black imageless works on a wall as a single piece. A knowledge of Jan Dibbets' geometric patterning would be irrelevant to their seriality and abstract surface design. And Sherrie Levine and Louise Lawler clearly have nothing to do with their photographing the sculpture and paintings of other artists. Rather every move is the Starns' own invention which was dictated by a compelling urge to make art about such themes as distancing, removal, infinity, or the destructive power of the relentless tide of time, and to inject these themes with a subtle and sometimes not-so-subtle tension. It is this powerful sensitivity and not any technical invention or drive to redefine photography that sets the Starns apart from their predecessors and contemporaries. The significance of their work lies in the powerful, tense and often haunting emotions that drive it and give it meaning.

# KURT VONNEGUT

*Mary Akashah*

*"Kurt Vonnegut is a gentleman."*

*So I am told by his friend, artist Syd Solomon, before I arrive at the writer's Long Island country home for this interview. The words stay with me, for in seeking to draw a picture for the reader, I feel I would do better as a painter.*

*The author, of course, needs no introduction. The man who produced such works as* Slaughter House 5, Breakfast of Champions, *and the recent, best-selling* Galapagos, *along with numerous other exceptional pieces of literature, has firmly established his place as one of twentieth century America's greatest novelists.*

*The person behind the books, however, is a somewhat different matter. I can tell you that he is tall, even taller than I expected, and leave a vague physical impression; or I can say that he is charming, and generous with his time despite the well-known fact that he dislikes interviews. And he is soft-spoken—so much so that at times it is difficult to hear what he has to say.*

*And he is witty, of course, this man who writes exquisitely, albeit painfully, funny books; but it is a wry, sly humor which does not lend itself to transcription. Communicated in expressions and gestures, it is filtered to reach the printed page, and what seems hilarious face to face seems muted in translation. This dimension cannot be restored.*

*There is politeness. He is frank and open in his mannerisms, at times somewhat shy; even, endearingly, seeming slightly embarrassed when the pithy language he uses to express himself in writing is introduced casually into polite conversation. And he is supremely human, reaching beyond the confines of the interview to make more decent, basic contact. "Common decency" is something he has chosen to write about.*

*One hopes these broad strokes will coalesce in the reader's mind to form an abstract impression of the whole. Still, I find myself looking elsewhere for definition. I do not know if the summation would meet with his agreement, or even his approval, but in the end the writer turns to the painter to draw the essence from the portrait.*

*Essentially, Kurt Vonnegut is a gentleman.*

*MARY AKASHAH: You've made no secret of the fact you hate doing interviews. You've said you think it's a useless way of getting inside a writer's head.*

KURT VONNEGUT: Well, it's just like putting a bung in a barrel, you know, and turning it on. Why should I do it the slow way? When someone can think of smart questions to ask me, it comes out real fast.

*MA: Do you not think people get anything out of reading interviews?*

KV: Oh, sure, they do. But for beginning journalists, journalistic students and all that, the big score would be getting an interview with somebody well-known; it's getting the person, it's not what they finally get out of the person. "Hey," you know, "here I am just a junior in journalism school and I got to do an interview with Leonard Bernstein!" And nobody cares what Bernstein said, or whatever, just that the kid was enterprising enough to get to him.

*MA: You said once that the most exciting, high-energy things being written today are being written for the stage. Would you care to elaborate on that?*

KV: Well, Sam Shepard is very exciting, and so is Marsha Norman and all that, and part of the excitement is that people aren't making much money out of it. It's such a relief, if you see the things that go on in American Playhouse on Educational Television. Everybody works for minimum wage, that's all: Christopher Walken, Susan Sarandon, me . . . we did a thing together. There was no way we could make any money out of this. So they do a good job.

The money can be terribly discouraging. You know, if you put your mind to it you can think, "If this is a big hit, I'll never have to work again." There is that kind of money being made in show business. So it's a relief to have all this stuff coming out of Chicago now, out of Steppenwolf and some of the other theatres there, where everybody just makes the same amount of money. Their idea is to put on a play.

I was in Czechoslovakia, and the actors and directors and all that are theoretically amateurs who belong to the Textile Union, or the Transportation Union, or whatever; and they're cuckoo about theatre. That's all. People ought to put on plays—it's more damn fun! And getting back to that "more damn fun" spirit is just a great relief.

*MA: You're putting it in that context, then—that it's fun and not that you think there's a lack of dynamism in American novels?*

KV: Oh, I don't think the novelists are doing a very good job now, but these things are historical. They're like geological movements, or whatever, and nobody really understands it. I go to a lot of theatre, just as a consumer, and I would rather do that. It's a lot more exciting. There are a lot more surprises.

There are all these workmanlike novels. They're brilliantly done, with wonderful dialogue, characterization, action, scene . . . but somehow it's not enough. I think the selection of subject matter is part of the problem, because people will be very proud to turn out a novel which is every bit as good as a novel which was written in the eighteenth or nineteenth century, you know, and it doesn't seem that there's very much that's responsive to our time.

But, what the hell! Our President doesn't read books, so why should anybody else?

*MA: Your best-known play was* Happy Birthday, Wanda June.

KV: Well, I've written several. I was up in Cape Cod and they've been produced in summer stock up there. And I just wrote another one last summer. That's been optioned and apparently it's going to open a year from now. So, yes, I'm interested in theatre.

*MA: I rather thought you'd given up on writing plays.*

KV: Well, there are historical reasons, because novelists don't write good plays and playwrights don't write good novels, so it's a waste of time for either one of them to try! But . . . what the hell. We'll see what happens.

*MA: Is it an enjoyable experiment for you?*

KV: Well, you get a family out of it.

*MA: You do?*

KV: Yes. You get to smoke backstage in the theatre. Everybody greets you. It's a regular little gang back there.

*MA: What about short stories?*

KV: There's no place to publish them.

*MA: Is that the main reason you don't write more of them?*

KV: No, but part of it is. It's a very artificial form. It's almost as artificial as a sonnet, because you have to misrepresent life in order to fit something into that short a space. And you also have to pretend that life is in these encapsulated moments, you know, that begin and end sort of like nice sausages. And life isn't really like that.

*MA: Some people would have a lot of fun doing that.*

KV: Well, it is, but it's extremely hard. It's almost like solving one of those *Times* of London puzzles, you know—the punning puzzles. And it's just that in a novel or a play you can really talk about life and not worry about the length or, actually, the ending.

*MA: Well, to go back, then, to novels, you've said that we shouldn't bother looking for great minds in our English Literature departments.*

KV: Well, all I said was that young people in an English Literature department will not become writers because they have too much taste. They have taste because they have read. They are, in fact, in competition, when they start out, with the greatest writers who ever lived at the peak of their powers—customarily Shakespeare at the age of fifty, Tolstoy at the age of sixty . . . And you've *got* to be content with your own bad work. If you're in an English department, this simply will not do—you've missed by so much. Well, of course you've missed, because you're only nineteen years old!

I suppose there have been exceptions, but there are very few precocious writers. There are precocious poets, precocious musicians, precocious mathematicians . . . but literature is so dependent on experience, as well as remarkable gifts, that a person isn't likely to have seen enough until he or she is about thirty, and then begins to understand what love affairs are like, or how you respond to death, or whatever. Truman Capote was precocious in the sense that his early short stories were poems, so they didn't really have involvement experience. They were reminiscences of childhood—at the age of eighteen remembering what it was like to be ten.

*MA: You also said that literature departments placed too much emphasis on literature and not enough on subject matter, and that literature shouldn't disappear up its own asshole. Do you feel there's a real problem with that happening in American literature?*

KV: Well, it does happen all the time. We publish 40,000 new titles a year. I don't know how many of those are novels, maybe about 4,000 or so, and most of them sink without a trace although a person has worked on them for two or three years or more. So, in a way, the people *have* disappeared up their own assholes.

But people aren't reading books now anyway, so if we *had* a great literature nobody would notice it.

*MA: That's a depressing thought.*

KV: But an awful lot of people still do it. Writers are trying to make livings, too, and so more and more novels are reading like movie scripts now, because the chances of finding a lot of readers are very slim.

*MA: Why write novels, then, instead of scripts?*

KV: Simply because it's easier to hustle if it's in a nice volume and you've got some favorable reviews and all that. The people who buy movies are barbarous and very impressed with that sort of thing.

*MA: Well, you yourself didn't study literature. You studied chemistry first, and then anthropology. Why anthropology?*

KV: It's the study of MAN! Why not? Hell, if they didn't give it to me in the first grade, I figured I'd better get it in graduate school; it would be my last chance!

*MA: Were you planning on being a writer at that point?*

KV: No. I would have been an anthropologist. I would have been a lot of things. I wanted to be a journalist, and work for the Chicago City News Bureau, which is how you got onto the Chicago papers. But this was right after the Second World War and, actually, it was an interesting feminist episode because you know, Rosie the Riveter had supposedly gone home, happy to have children and get popped by the old man. And the newspapers had hired a lot of women, and they were *good*. They were damn good! And the Chicago City News Bureau was the only way you could get a job on the Chicago papers. You were ordinarily there for about three months, and then you got some kind of job on one of the big papers. And the whole system just clogged. Nobody was going anywhere because the women damn well weren't going to quit!

*MA: Did your training in anthropology affect your writing, do you think, with that ethnographer's point of view?*

KV: Oh, sure. Yes. What seems fresh about my work, and unusual and all that, is social science. Because people in English departments don't know anything else. They don't know anything that's going on in the rest of the school, you know. They have to guess about it, and guess wrong! They don't know what physicists are like, or what biologists are like, and they're embarrassed when the subject of science comes up. You know, they think it's not artistic—or they *hope* it isn't, because they don't know anything about it.

*MA: Your anthropology background fascinates me because I know several people who wanted to write, myself included, who went into anthropology because it promised them a wider scope.*

KV: Well, what I got out of it—and most people can't do it—is to think of the culture, of the society, as separate from themselves—as a gadget. They can't see the boundaries, so they can't set that culture apart and criticize it in any way, or even imagine that it *is* criticized, as every social scientist learns to do. I mean, people like the New Right people just think it's terrible to criticize your culture.

*MA: You once described anthropology as a science which is mostly poetry. Is that one of the things which appealed to you about it?*

KV: Oh, sure. I started out, and I was going to be a biochemist, so I was taking a lot of physics and chemistry and all that: and everything was quantifiable or you did not discuss it. And nothing is quantifiable in anthropology. There were all these ludicrous mistakes made early on when they thought they *could* apply scientific methods. The only numbers in anthropology now are, you know, useless—skull dimensions and bones. You know: the long-headed people, and the round-headed people . . . You can measure it all, and then what have you got?

Do you know how they measure the capacity of a skull, incidentally?

*MA: No.*

KV: They drill a hole in the skull, in the top of it, and fill it with rice. Isn't that nice?

*MA: I must have been absent the day they explained that.*

KV: Well, if the problem ever comes up . . . !

*MA: Did you really get your M.A. for* Cat's Cradle*?*

KV: Well, what happened was that I had a wife and a kid, and I was also working as a police reporter, and it just wasn't enough to live on. I wrote two theses, and they were both rejected. I had taken the exams, so it was only the thesis work left for the Master's degree, and I went to work with General Electric in Schenectady. The University of Chicago then gave a Bachelor's degree after two years, and when I entered I had no degree from Cornell, where I'd been studying chemistry. I got into their grad school with a competitive exam they gave for returning vets.

So I got in and, Christ, finally when I left I'd been going to college for six or seven years and I had no damn degree to show for it! I was living on Cape Cod, trying to be a writer, and after I quit General Electric I was so broke I wanted to get a job teaching. But when I went, I was completely uneducated—I had no document to show I was educated.

So I kept writing to the University of Chicago, which had slipped back to the four year program, and I said, "Won't you please give me a Bachelor's, as I'm so far beyond that." But it turned out that everybody who got the Bachelor's had to take a one year survey course of American civilization. There was no waiving that, and I would have to go out there and do this. So I said. "I won't go out there and take some damn survey course!"

Well, they got quite snotty about it. You know, it was all my fault; and it was *their* fault! So I said, "The hell with it," and then finally got a job on the faculty of Harvard and I was teaching there. And I got a letter from a guy who had just taken over the Social Sciences Department, and he told me, "I just took over this office, and I found this huge dossier with your name on it. So I looked at it, studied it—acrimonious letters and all that—and under the rules of the university, you have been entitled to a Master's degree for quite some time, having published a reputable book." Several, by then. So the first time I asked them, I could have had a Master's degree!

So they just gave it to me, and asked me to come out there, and I wouldn't do it. I said, "Send it to me, since I've been entitled under the rules of the university the whole time."

The guys in the Anthropology Department didn't know about that rule, obviously.

*MA: That's quite a story!*

KV: It was annoying enough. And finally when I got the damn degree I really didn't need it, and they wanted to make a big publicity deal out of it.

*MA: I can imagine . . . Folk societies and the attractiveness of folk society . . .*

KV: Did you study it? Did you read Redfield's book on the folk society?

*MA: Yes, I did.*

KV: Well, because I keep saying that's what everybody yearns for and everything, and I think, indeed they do. But I also hear from people who have lived in them, and they say, "Brother, it is hell, although it may sound all right to you."

*MA: That's what I was thinking. I spent six years in the Middle East and that extended family,which sounds too wonderful, is incredibly stultifying.*

KV: Yes.

*MA: I don't think you can be creative in that kind of atmosphere.*

KV: I think you can still yearn for it, though, because that's what we had for a million years.

*MA: I think so. Yes. There seems to be a need for it. Perhaps a new kind of extended family . . .*

KV: Oh, sure—the block associations, because I think it makes a whole lot more sense that way. I think now that our government is just one more huge corporation struggling to survive and keep our attention, just like General Motors and General Electric and DuPont and so forth, it's all they can do to run themselves and maintain the publicity and all that to let you know they're around. So I think, really, we have to look out for each other, and the way to do it is with block associations.

*MA: People certainly need more emotional support, minus the pressure to conform all the time.*

KV: Yes, well . . . I think they cripple gifted people, too, out of envy.

*MA: Envy?*

KV: Yes. Members of the family say, you know, "Don't get any big ideas about going to New York to be an actor," or "Don't think you're so goddamned beautiful . . ."

*MA: You had to leave home, didn't you, to be a writer?*

KV: Yes. Well, I'm not angry at Indianapolis at all. It's just out there. There was the free enterprise economy, and I couldn't make a living. Again, if I'd been able to get a job on a newspaper, I would have been perfectly happy to be a newspaperman all my life.

*MA: So you would have stayed in Indianapolis and never written a novel at all.*

KV: Those people have nice lives, the locals do, in cities like Des Moines, and all that. Again, the money thing drives you crazy so much, someone saying, "Hey, you can make a million dollars if you leave home."

*MA: You've described the writer as a perpetual outsider.*

KV: Well, he pretends to be. Allen Ginsberg and I got into the American Academy of Arts and Letters the same year, and *Newsweek* called me up and asked me what I thought about two outsiders like us getting in. And I said, "If we aren't the Establishment, I don't know who is!" Because we sure as hell were by then! And, you know, Norman Mailer, in order to get artistic energy and all that, pretends to be an outsider, but he's as central as Jackie Kennedy.

*MA: Is it all facade, then, or do you have to maintain that perspective in order to write?*

KV: Oh, hell, most writers *are* outsiders, but the ones you've heard of aren't.

*MA: Not anymore.*

KV: No.

*MA: Does that affect their writing, do you think?*

KV: No, I don't think so. I do think you can be so inside that the case is hopeless. If you are from an old family, educated at Groton and then Harvard and a lot of your crew is from Yale, and you've had the right clothes, you're a fine sailor, have most agreeable relatives, a beautiful summer home and all . . . You haven't got a chance!

*MA: You've said that you want a military funeral . . .*

KV: I do.

*MA: . . . because it would help you to gain the unqualified acceptance of your community.*

KV: Yes.

*MA: Is that truly the reason you want it?*

KV: Sure. I would have been happy to die in World War II for that reason, too, but everybody would have thought I was a nut! I'm gonna leave anyway, sooner or later, so why not find a way to leave that will attract favorable attention?

*MA: Do you feel you attract too much unfavorable attention?*

KV: No. But this is *unqualified* approval. Hell. I want to be buried in Arlington Cemetery. I've already given my papers to the Library of Congress. I want the whole thing.

*MA: If you'd always had unqualified approval, do you think you'd be writing the things you write?*

KV: I get all the acceptance I want. Rejection is essentially from the same people who were disagreeable in high school . . . No, I've gotten amazing acceptance. I'm part of the Establishment. We eat at the Mayor's house sometimes.

*MA: Are they reading you in Indianapolis these days?*

KV: I don't think so, but they're not reading anything out there. It's a feminine thing to do, you know. Women read books.

*MA: I remember a reference you once made to a psychiatric study which defined writers as fundamentally depressed personalities.*

KV: Yes. It was at the University of Iowa. The writers' Workshop was out there, and also their terrific Med School. They have a big Psychiatry Department, and somebody over there realized that they could study them—because writers are usually scattered all over the place. So they did a study, over several years, as to what the psychiatric and nervous system problems have been with writers: interviewing us,and also asking about our families—relatives and parents, ancestors, and all that. And they found a very consistent strain—in the ancestry, too—in virtually all the writers they talked to, of depression.

*MA: Seriously.*

KV: Yes. And really *bad* depression!

*MA: That's fascinating.*

KV: But never schizophrenia.

*MA: Really? Just depression?*

KV: That's bad enough.

*MA: Yes, I know.*

KV: It's your FAULT! You feel like it's your *fault*, you know! With schizophrenia you don't go wrong!

*MA: I'd love to know why this should be.*

KV: Well, I have no bright guesses about it. I think depressed people, with the little help that's available, have to save their own lives; just have to work their own way out of it, you know . . . Get out of bed and start an exercise program, or start *something*. And writing, for people who are gifted that way anyway, turns out to be moderately therapeutic.

*MA: It's something you can do alone, too, without forcing yourself to face the world.*

KV: Yes. And, also, you can write pessimistically.

*MA:* Slaughterhouse 5 *had a tremendous effect on me. It was such a wrenching book, and I found myself relating it to my own generation's experience with Vietnam, and how so many people are still in many ways affected by it: and considering the lasting effects. I was surprised to read in some of your later works that you really don't think about [the firebombing of] Dresden anymore, that it doesn't follow you around somehow.*

KV: No. It was a big adventure. It was terrific—I wouldn't have missed it for anything. And you know, people think that that's what makes me sad when I'm sad, and all that, but it's not.

*MA: Not at all?*

KV: I wouldn't have missed it for anything! I liked the war! Here I am a pacifist and I just loved that war!

*MA: I would certainly imagine it was exciting.*

KV: Oh, yeah. There was something for everybody!

*MA: You've written that the destruction of Dresden was so senseless that only one person on the planet benefitted from it—you.*

KV: Yes. Nobody's ever challenged me on that.

*MA: I certainly wouldn't, but it was so painful to read, I find it hard to imagine it didn't hurt you.*

KV: Well, it offended me about *life*, yes . . . about the world. But I think most people hate life and, you know, that's the real secret of what the hell's going on. Most people don't like it very much, and that's why the peace movement is so weak, and why people are so casual about these damn fool weapons we've got now. I think most people find life much too hard and embarrassing.

*MA: Embarrassing?*

KV: Yes . . . They don't dance very good . . . They don't make love very good . . . They can't do any sport very well. they're sure as hell not making a lot of money! And this super bull society, where just a few people *live* and everybody else lives in envy of all these people 'til the end of their lives . . . Well, you know—shit on a mutt!!!

*MA: I'm surprised you never considered being a psychotherapist!*

KV: No, I'd be a social scientist, because it's the society that's doing terribly destructive things.

Of course, you can't limit any sort of activity. I mean, here I am, a First Amendment absolutist, so I can't make any recommendation whatsoever about how somebody else should tone something down. But I think . . . Well, take these basketball tournaments we have now. Here are these people who have devoted their *lives* to shooting baskets; and their bodies are just *magnificent*, their coordination, and all that. Yet every year we arrange a festival so every one of those players will feel like a piece of shit, except one team. *Crying* for having lost in the finals! . . . Dragging your ass home . . . What kind of society is that? Why make them go head to head?

*MA: You wrote that Dresden didn't even cost you your innocence—that you lost that after Hiroshima.*

KV: Yes. My experiences one to one with human beings have been almost uniformly gratifying. It's when I run into people who really

intend to do me harm—cheat me or something like that . . . well, they've really got a screw loose, you know. So you take that into account and you watch out. But there in Dresden we were all privates, and had to work for our keep under the Geneva Convention. There were a hundred of us—just a random sampling of the American population. And I really like those people. I really thought they were OK.

*MA: Do you ever run into any of the flyers who were bombing Dresden?*

KV: Yes, and that's all right. The guy who admitted me to the University of Chicago still had his boots on! He'd bombed me about six months before.

*MA: Why do you say you lost your innocence after Hiroshima, then?*

KV: I don't know. I've only been to Japan once. I went there about a year and a half ago, and the fellow I was with went around saying, "Thank God for the atom bomb, or I'd be dead." And that was a very offensive thing to say over there! But after a few days, people were coming up to him and saying, "I would have been dead, too," because our invasion force was in Okinawa, and they were dying in huge numbers going ashore on their home islands.

And I did not go to Hiroshima. I was supposed to go down there—everybody's supposed to go down there and say, you know, "This must never happen again, it was terrible," and all that—but I also think it's a form of absolution for the Japanese. They've got it figured out that they were this peace-loving island people, artistic and all that, and this huge industrial monster just came and blew the shit out of them. And, really, it wasn't quite the case at all—they had precipitated the whole damn war. They'd gone berserk, the worst sort of militarists, and I think to go to Hiroshima is to allow them to forget that. And guess who gets to take on the guilt? The Americans.

*MA: I have a friend from Nagasaki, and it's very difficult for me to listen to her speak about it.*

KV: Just peaceful, loving, artistic, very smart, *little* people—much smaller than us—and one day we flew over and just blew the shit out of them. Just for the fun of it.

Of course, any country that *can*, will load you up with guilt before you go home!

*MA: I don't know how you feel about this but early on you were usually described as a "cult figure." Your books were read by college students in the '60s and early '70s, and you were pretty much considered a cult figure.*

KV: And they never saw me! You know, I never "appeared to my people" or whatever. My books were cult books, but *I* certainly wasn't much in evidence. I marched in peace rallies, and stuff like that, mingled with the crowds and into the streets, but I wasn't like Timothy Leary or Abbie Hoffman or somebody like that who was very much in evidence.

*MA: Did that have any effect on your writing, the fact that you were writing for a relatively small audience?*

KV: No. It was a big audience.

*MA: Relatively speaking.*

KV: Well, anybody who writes for *readers* is writing for a relatively small audience! You know, we have forty million people in this country who can't read or write. They couldn't read me if they wanted to! That's the same number of people that are in East Germany and Poland combined.

That has to be a tyranny of some kind inside the American empire. Forty million captive people here who couldn't exchange ideas on paper if they wanted to.

*MA: Has the focus of your readership changed, or how has it changed?*

KV: I can't tell you, but my mail is certainly not from teeny-boppers. I just spoke to the Annual Congress of the American Universalist Association, and it was all grown-ups.

The book clubs usually pick me as an alternate selection, so there's adult readership or whatever there.

*MA: You've said you get artistic unity in your work by writing for just one person. For years it was your sister, even after she died. Do you still do that?*

KV: Sure. Everyone should. *You* should. It's the only way to focus your thoughts.

*MA: Galapagos is somewhat different in tone from you other books.*

KV: I hope it is. I don't want them all to sound the same!

But I'm very proud of *Galapagos*. It's a good book. It's good *science*. And I got a letter from Stephen Jay Gould saying that Darwinism *is* being revised, and he added, "But don't tell the Christians!" You know, we don't want the right wingers to get hold of it!

*MA: There are basic themes to your work—loneliness, mechanization, the ruination of the planet . . .*

KV: Loneliness is a terrible thing. Just think of the people now from Minnesota or whatever, going to Houston to look for work . . . it's such a terrible thing.

*MA: Are you going to continue to work with this theme, then, improving it?*

KV: Well, I'm not writing about loneliness now. I'm writing about painters and their families.

*MA: That's what you're working on at the moment?*

KV: Yes. There were artists in my family, you know, and there are a lot of painters living around here. Syd Solomon, for one, has been very helpful. So I'm learning. I always wondered why painters, like abstract-expressionists, loved Jackson Pollock so much, and I found out that what they were grateful to him for had little to do with style. It was the recognition he brought them. He made it easier for them to make a living! So I'm having a lot of fun with it.

*MA: You were an admitted pessimist for years, and then began writing that you had become an optimist.*

KV: Yes, I was for a while. There were all these things going on with the peace movement, and the anti-nuclear people, the environmentalists. And I started to get optimistic.

*MA: It doesn't sound as though you feel that way anymore.*

KV: No. They stopped.

*MA: Is there any particular reason* Siren of Titans *is always listed as your own favorite of your books?*

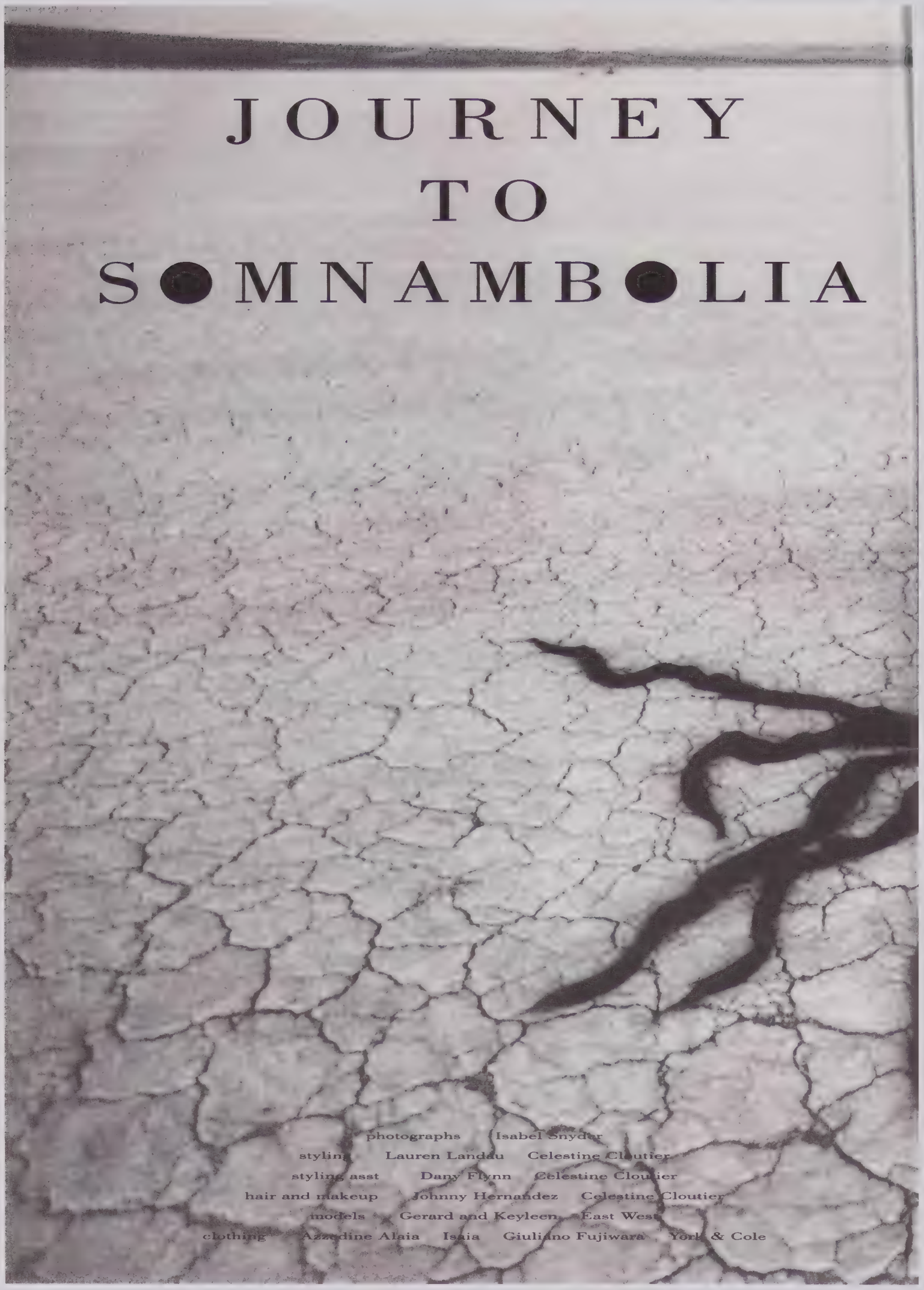
KV: It was nice and easy, and I hadn't written a novel for years!

*MA: Do you like to write? I know you quoted Renata Adler as saying a writer is somebody who really doesn't like to write.*

KV: Oh, it all depends on what day it is. Since I've been up, I've got a book now which I finally understand. I just pretended I understood it, and I didn't know what I was writing about. But now I understand what my mind had on its mind the whole time and so, of course, yes—I like it *now*.

I'm not in any hurry to finish it, of course.

# JOURNEY TO SOMNAMBOLIA



photographs Isabel Snyder

styling Lauren Landau Celestine Cloutier

styling asst Dany Flynn Celestine Cloutier

hair and makeup Johnny Hernandez Celestine Cloutier

models Gerard and Keyleen East West

clothing Azzedine Alaia Isaia Giuliano Fujiwara York & Cole

# *The Auteur Films of Francis Coppola*

*Carol Rutter*

***Film directors graduate to auteur status through film critics' and scholars' attention to their body of work. An auteur's creative energy translates his inner vision to the screen, bypassing the Hollywood trend-of-the- month. In doing so, the auteur stylistically imprints a unique and sometimes pleasantly warped signature on each film. Equally important, auteurs advance film aesthetics and excite the well-worn viewer with their originality. This inventiveness depends on an implied comparison with all the great films from the past.***

***Francis Coppola has secured a large section in the annals of international film history. Actors want to work with him and studios know he can rescue a troubled project from extinction, as he did with*** The Cotton Club ***and*** Peggy Sue Got Married. ***These films, and*** Gardens of Stone, ***represent assignments of "somebody else's idea." Only recently, with*** Tucker ***(due out June 1988), has Coppola returned to making personal films. This is his first since*** Rumble Fish ***(1983).***

Tucker ***is about failed automobile inventor Preston Tucker, whose life parallels Coppola's to some degree. Tucker experiments with automobile design closely resemble Coppola's electronic cinema experiments leading up to*** One From The Heart. ***Tucker's futuristic designs so threatened the large auto makers of the late 1940s that they virtually railroaded him out of the business. Apparently, Tucker proposed seat belts and other safety features, but was told to abandon the idea because it would imply cars were unsafe. Coppola's technological innovations revolutionized the filmmaking process, yet*** One From The Heart ***was strongly opposed because everyone thought these innovations would show on the screen like the special effects in*** Star Wars.

***Each man is also a risk taker prone to severe financial volatility. In fact, when Tucker's money runs out, his employees offer to work for free, just like Coppola's employees during*** One From The Heart.

***Coppola's commitment to*** Tucker ***dates back more than a decade. His father Carmine Coppola invested a large chunk of capital into The Tucker, only to lose every penny. Coppola's interest in*** Tucker ***even predates his own sour experiences with technological experimentation. After*** One From The Heart, ***the film that cost him his studio and a reported $40 million personal debt, his interest in Preston Tucker changed from sympathy to empathy and compassion. More important, Coppola is back directing meaningful projects without interference.***

***During an interview in New York, Coppola spoke with passion about his other personal films. His hope at that time was that*** Tucker ***would mean a permanent break from assignments, so he could plunge into exclusively personal projects thereafter.***

*CAROL RUTTER: Assignments like* The Cotton Club, Peggy Sue Got Married *and* Gardens of Stone *seem so different from personal films like* One From The Heart, Apocalypse Now *and* Rumble Fish. *Can you account for these differences?*

FRANCIS COPPOLA: I work hard on assignments and feel attached to the projects, but they don't allow me to go all the way. I'd like to make the film that comes after *One From The Heart*. I want to make long, big, epic style movies with contemporary subjects and characters, like epic poems. That's why I hate stories so much.

*CR: Conventional story-telling doesn't figure into your personal works. I'm referring especially to* The Conversation *and* Apocalypse Now.

FC: The story is the yolk that's always pulling you back into the middle of the path where the writer wants you to go. Certain critics say my films have no stories. What they mean is the same old telling of the same old story. What I'm trying to get at is a story more suitable for contemporary audiences.

*CR: Does it concern you that the spectator's priority is still by and large story and character, and are you concerned about alienating the viewer?*

FC: I've always had this problem. I made this Irish film called *Aamon the Terrible* when I was a student at UCLA. It was funny and well-made and many other students were excited by the rushes. It was a comedy, but when I showed it, the audience was totally quiet. It got applause at the end, but I never knew whether it got this reaction because everyone was so awe-stricken or because they didn't know what to make of it. I think they didn't know what to make of it. So that student film got the same reaction as my other films, except *The Godfather*. Even *The Godfather* had its detractors at the time. Although the audiences loved the film, it was long and dark.

*CR: Each of your films is so completely different from the others except* The Godfather *films. You seem to invent a style to suit the subject, but at the same time there are stylistic overlaps among your films.*

FC: *Apocalypse Now* was the first film I worked on where differing styles became even more apparent to me. I like that I'm experimenting towards some direction and that at least I have a direction I'm going toward. I'm not just sitting on a griddle making the same movie over and over again. I really do have personal aspirations towards a certain kind of movie that I haven't seen very much of. I haven't made it yet and I don't know exactly how to make it. Each film I work on has something in it that has part of what I'm looking for. If I learn more about theatricality, music and editing, then maybe I'll be able to make this kind of movie that's more personal to me. I'm really sick of period movies and I want to write about more contemporary ideas.

*CR: How do you form and develop ideas for writing?*

FC: I work in a source gathering mode in which I read, research, talk to people, fantasize and gather as much stuff as possible. I put it together towards some structural end. Then I revise and edit and try to make it more concise. At the very end, I still might put new ideas in. The end is always more stimulating because I can see what it's going to be, and I get a lot of really good ideas near the end. At the beginning, I'm just schlepping mud around.

*CR: Do you incubate ideas for a long time?*

FC: I talk about my projects long before they happen. If someone says: "that sounds awful," I'll take it seriously. Then if seven bright people have all reacted in a certain way, I take this seriously. So I'm always trying out ideas on people.

*CR: What's it like when you work with other screenwriters?*

FC: I like to work with other writers in a quiet room with no telephone, with a big table and the precious tools and research materials. We sit across the table from one another. We type or write, then pass it into the computer. I'll play records from the film's period and I know I'm starting a new project. Collaborating is a very pleasant and cozy experience. I don't like writing so fast; I want to take out time to write. I'm still a writer who directs although I haven't written anything alone for a long time. I'd like to reach a point of writing original material then producing it.

*CR: Your writing is very concise. One example from* The Conversation *represents your ability to choose one word for two functions. Bernie Moran says: "I was rereading Dear Abby the other day." With "rereading" we get a commentary on Moran's character in a way not possible with "reading."*

FC: Yes, they're quite different. Yet I feel that I only learned the art of concision in recent years, partly due to word processors and having the opportunity to edit myself a lot and see if I can say something in shorter form.

*CR: Your screenwriting seems to be characterized primarily by narrative economy. In* The Godfather Part II, *the Superman sequence operates on many levels. First we think that the boys are going to a sleazy nightclub event, but soon we figure out that the Superman show [named for the size of a performer's penis] is merely a backdrop for some heavy exchanges, plot information and deadly glances between Michael Corleone and his hired gun who is instructed to kill another character.*

FC: We wanted to capture a part of the real Havana with this show. At the same time, we had this really big problem of how to show that Fredo knew Johnny Ola from before so Michael would find out. I admit I was a little embarrassed by this scene. It sounded so dumb at the beginning. I like scenes to have a show or something to give it more levels.

*CR: Who wrote this scene, you or Mario Puzo?*

FC: I wrote this movie myself then showed it to Mario Puzo. It's got to be offensive to have someone write something in your style with your characters. But he approved a lot of stuff and gave it the once over. The scene with Frank Pentangelli about the Romans in the bathtub was written by Mario Puzo and lifted from his *The Death of Michael Corleone*, a sequel to *The Godfather*.

*CR: You seem to shy away from sexual explicitness in your films. When things get racy in* One From The Heart, *you make sure this scene is obscured by shadows and darkness.*

FC: I've never revealed much about women and sex. I don't feel comfortable doing it. People who put their sexual fantasies on screen maybe don't have any in real life. Conversely, maybe those who have them in real life don't put them on screen. I don't even feel comfortable about obscenities in my films. They usually get in because the actors want them in. I'm not prudish; I just don't feel comfortable about this. Yet. In those few times we were going to do a steamy scene, I find that I got so self-conscious with a woman involved that I didn't want to make her do this. And if she, the slightest bit, said: "Oh I'm so embarrassed, do I have to?" instead of saying: "Take off your clothes and get over there," I back off. In *Megalopolis*, this new novelistic project I'm writing, it gets pretty steamy. We'll see what happens when I actually have to ask someone to do these scenes.

*CR: You know Brian DePalma, Martin Scorsese, George Lucas and Steven Spielberg personally. Do their personalities show up in their films?*

FC: It's so hard to know because you have to ask: "Where's their real character, in the film or in person?" Maybe DePalma's real personality is in his movies because I see him as the type of person who will not do harm and cut heads off and have girls run around in their underwear all the time. But it must be him because he's doing it. Equally so, George's personality is cynical like a journalist and he's always making these Easter Bunny characters in a saccharin wholesome Disney type of world. So again, I wonder if it's the real Georgè. Steven I see the most because he's one of those bright kids who thinks things are neat and makes them be like that. Marty's movies are dark and brooding, but the real Marty is so lovable. All those guys are like teddy bears and I feel affection towards them.

*CR: I've never understood why Lucas and Spielberg are always favorably treated by the press, while in recent years you've had a tough time.*

FC: I was the oldest and the first. Early on the press misunderstood my saying: I'm going to have a company in San Francisco and we're going to make unusual personal movies and I'm going to reinvent how movies are made. The misunderstanding is that those statements are anything more than me thinking on my feet. But they thought: "Let's see." Mean-

Above: ***The Conversation*, 1974,** film still.

Above ***Apocalypse Now*, 1979,** film still.

while, if you don't do it in their eyes, even if they help screw it up, they knock you over; that's how they get rid of the phonies.

*CR: What do you mean by phonies?*

FC: A phony is someone who says I'm going to do this or that and doesn't do anything. All I'm saying is the press distorts some things.

*CR: Would you be a filmmaker if you hadn't gone to film school?*

FC: I think so. It was a step I chose because of Sergei Eisenstein. Theater was another step towards film. I originally wanted to be a playwright. While I was a theater student, I saw Eisenstein's *Ten Days That Shook The World* and was so impressed with what you could do with film.

*CR: Do you find film students more sophisticated now than in your day?*

FC: I doubt it. Students are geared towards successful films rather than making great works of art. California film schools are concerned with, and rightly so, the great examples of Lucas and Spielberg.

*CR: Do you enjoy working with recent film school graduates?*

FC: The film school age tends to have formed ideas already and approach a known director as some form of advancement rather than to learn. We used to hire them as assistants at Zoetrope, but I personally prefer to work with much younger people. On location, I'll invite the community to send twenty 13 year olds to come and watch or do anything they want. At Zoetrope, they used to come after school, and the ones interested in acting would be assigned to an actor. Those interested in art would go to the art department, etc. They were spread all over the studio and had the run of the studio. My idea was to catch them before they knew everything.

*CR: What's Zoetrope's status since you lost your L.A. studios in 1982?*

FC: Wherever we make our films, Zoetrope suddenly exists. We're like a movable enterprise. A lot of people don't understand that we didn't lose Zoetrope when we lost that building. We kept everything. We own all those films because I was able to keep working and make arrangements with the banks to pay off large amounts so eventually we'll be at zero.

*CR: But you must have been devastated by the loss of the studio.*

FC: I was hurt very badly financially and had to deal with the mind readers, the opposite of a cheerleading section, who made me ask: "Are my movies as bad as you say or are you exaggerating?" On top of this the banks heard this, and I had to deal with bankers who would get very nervous.

*CR: Do investors or studios ever pose a conflict? Do they ever try to impose creative ideas on you?*

FC: This is always difficult because I'm living more in the future and I'm thinking about film and film forms that are so interesting. It was preferable to put up all my own money on *Apocalypse Now* and *One From The Heart* than to have to go through hours and hours of trying to talk people into financing my projects. Especially people who don't see things the way I do, who are not allowing that it's possible that the way I do it is also o.k. They rather think I'm talented but say: "Well sure Francis is very talented, but why can't he do it the way he's supposed to and quit fooling around and get serious about things." In conventional Hollywood, it's money, pride, personality and ego. Art has always been a big controversy. People who fool around with art forms and religious beliefs threaten the way the whole system is put together, and the system is set up to reject that.

*CR: All my research indicates that your problems with the press began in the Philippines. During* Apocalypse Now, *you had cost overruns, the weather was oppressive at best and a typhoon destroyed $1 million worth of sets and property, and there were serious health problems. But your most sensational event, as perceived by the press, was to show up with an unfinished version of the film at Cannes and then to share the top prize with Volker Schlondorff's* The Tin Drum. *To make matters even worse,* Apocalypse Now *ended up grossing well over $200 million.*

FC: You're absolutely right. The press arrived in the Philippines and would say: "Oh I was just here on vacation" then write all this damaging stuff. Then we're being hit by typhoons and I don't throw in the towel. Martin Sheen gets a heart attack and I don't throw in the towel. The whole time the press is characterizing this as a fiasco of money being overspent, instead of being on our side and recognizing that we were doing an American film. The Department of Defense was also cutting possibilities for us to make this film. The press only help or hinder on the basis of who's what's friend and who likes whom and who doesn't like whom. They were trying to capitalize off my troubles in the Philippines rather than to report it.

*CR: What would be the benefit for them?*

FC: For self-interest and to make a sensational story that would sell papers. There was nothing improper going on in the Philippines. If you really analyze it, you'll see that *Apocalypse Now* was a $30 million movie, the first of many $30 million movies.

*CR: When you started to go over budget, you apparently invested your own personal funds, yet in all the articles published about* Apocalypse Now, *this is virtually never mentioned. Why?*

FC: Don't ask me. Many films cost way more than they're supposed to. The press will amplify any noisy little eruption and try to make it into as big a deal as it can. Now I'm a

Above: ***Rumble Fish*, 1983,** film still.

Above: ***One From the Heart*, 1982,** film still.

marked man.

*CR: This must take a toll on you both creatively and personally.*

FC: There's a good toll and a bad toll. I was going on to making somewhat controversial movies. If I were writing them, they would be much more current and some people would resist this. George Lucas is very powerful but you'll notice that he's very quiet and he makes commercial projects and doesn't make any trouble. When you're famous and powerful, people want to get you. George doesn't make a stir and doesn't take a stand in any area that might irritate people. My own naivete gets me into trouble on this level. I didn't know there was this whole procedure you had to go through. All the things I said came from being really excited about them and I wanted to share them with everybody. My instinct is to share, but if you're gullible, you can be penalized.

*CR: Since* Rumble Fish *cost $11 million and* The Outsiders *$8 million, it seems to me you'd be better off making lower budget films because the film would realize profits faster.*

FC: Nowadays, you can't even make a so-called moderate budget film. It's the same rules for an $8–11 million film and the $40–50 million film. The trick about the $40 million film is that you're in the upper echelon of blob. You don't know what the hell anything is costing. Nobody else does either. An $11 million picture is smaller and more focused, but they're basically the same. Neither one is special because the smaller one can go bad too in terms of the politics of the movie and the harmonious relationships of different people. A big factor on the director is the mood of the man who's putting up the money and how he chooses to influence the production. It's like the weather. I don't want to be in either budget situation. I want to be in another thing that I basically want to put together for myself—a more intimate way of working with fewer people and using an entirely different type of technology.

*CR: Is* One From The Heart *your most daring technological experiment?*

FC: Oh, it was much more than that. *One From The Heart* was the first movie to kick off a new movie studio. In a way I was trying to develop certain aspects of our new studio through that movie. So, one, it had six contract actors, the beginning of an actor's company. Two, it had a tremendous scenic department. Three, it had an electronic aspect. It had apprentices which meant we'd try to get talent and workers in a different way. So *One From The Heart* was the project to start all these departments.

*CR:* One From The Heart *is special to me because you seemed to assign unusual values to different film elements. Characters are usually highlighted in other films, but are subservient in* One From The Heart *to sets, production design, lighting and other visual elements. No one character is fully developed, and the six together form a composite of contemporary single life.*

FC: The six *One From The Heart* characters do add up to something but the songs, lyrics and scenery all add up to something that few paid attention to. If you analyze just the character and story and don't allow those other things to be part of this gestalt, then you weren't going on the ride. My original idea on *One From The Heart* was to produce the whole thing live; have the actors walk through one set and the lights would be changing and the camera would be going and when it came out, it would be a movie. When we got out of two stages into nine, that started not to be possible, but the final cut does have some scenes like that.

*CR: Do you have any thoughts as to why audiences didn't appreciate* One From The Heart*?*

FC: In cinema, in this country, there's this requirement to stay realistic. *One From The Heart* was like *The Cotton Club*. At first audiences were really receptive and enthusiastic and found the film really delightful. Then I got the second opinion, which stuck. If you do *Oklahoma*, characters can't act in the same way as they do in *On The Waterfront*. Certain levels of style have acting that's appropriate for that style. I was afraid that if the characters were written as realistic characters, that there wouldn't be space for the scenery.

*CR:* Apocalypse Now *seems to have been a real turning point in your career. What kinds of changes did you experience?*

FC: I'm not the same person in any way. We were being so courageous and talented and all we knew at the time was: "Oh God, how am I going to get out of this one," or "How am I going to get the money to do this or that?" On *Apocalypse Now* we were doing work that was really personal. I went from a less mature view of myself and what life and work was about, to a bigger view, and I grew on every level. It was like forced and high pressure maturity and I feel more and more is possible. I don't live in the here and now so much as the future. I want to work on the most ambitious and unconventional piece about being alive.

*CR: Was* One From The Heart *a continuation of this process?*

FC: I decided to do *One From The Heart* while I was in Japan. This was a rehabilitation period after *Apocalypse Now* and I lived in Japan for a month in a room the size of a kitchenette. I tried to figure out what I should do and where I was going. It was a midlife crisis as they call it. So while I was thinking about all these things, they sent me the *One From The Heart* script and I thought about applying all these ideas about the way movies ought to be. *One From The Heart* is not realistic, it's futuristic. I was trying to get at the subject of love made up and broken up through a musical,

All photos, Museum of Modern Art film stills archive. continued page 83

# CHURCH OF THE SUBGENIUS

## *R.V. MAY*

"Follow the Jesus that didn't get nailed."

—SubGenius dictum

"My people are destroyed for a lack of Knowledge."

—Hosea 4:6

"I don't practice what I preach because I'm not the kind of person I'm preaching *to*."

—Bob

Top: Illustration by Lies, after Gustave Doré. Below: Dollar bill with "Bob" illustration by Rev. Ivan Stang

Cults have always been capable of educing the weird sentiments that hide in the dark attic of the brain. For some, the bloodletting of a satanic cult's human sacrifice gets their interest; others might find the cult prophet and his utterings of divine wisdom somehow intriguing. Those that actually become members of a secret sect are often intoxicated with the seemingly meaningless liturgical chants and recitations of esoteric knowledge—knowledge that puts them in cahoots with the other members.

All of which have been effective in the past to supply new blood to the various cults in operation, and are still effective today. However, there is a new breed of potential cult members around, those that consider themselves a little too sophisticated and incredulous to take part in something they intuitively know is manipulative and exploitative. What is there for the person who suspects the world is going to Hell on a fast train, and doesn't intend to be on it? What is there for the terminally unbalanced person to latch onto? Bowling leagues are out. The Existentialists don't have a mailing address, only some recondite writings by dead or inaccessible Europeans, hardly something to sink your teeth into. What is there for the spiritual person who believes the Christians have ruined Christianity?

The answer: "Bob."

J.R. "Bob" Dobbs *has* a mailing address—it's in Dallas, Texas. And when people write to "Bob," to share intimate thoughts with Him or to extract wisdom from Him, they are having Holy Communion with the godhead, the "Most Ascended Master," of The Church of the SubGenius; a faith that for some (the church is very secretive in this respect, but membership is believed to be between five and fifty thousand) is the cure-all for the philosophical quandary and general theological mess they've been in ever since they realized all the "New Age" bibles made better doorstops than anything else.

Who is "Bob"? Like any other compelling messianic deity, "Bob" is an ideal, a paradigm for clean living and good mental hygiene. Yet there is something strangely familiar about J.R. "Bob" Dobbs: the grin; the pipe; the neat, well-sculptured hair; the occasional ascot and yachting jacket. You've seen him before. He tried to sell you something. Shoes maybe. And it was always the same guy.

Back in the '50s, when the flaks at Madison Avenue needed a paragon of American Manhood, they found "Bob." His face and trim body were everywhere, peddling everything from V-necks to U-joints. Now "Bob" uses the same lowbrow techniques that he used to become the world's greatest salesman to become "the world's most dashing religious leader." "Bob" is good product. If he could sell hedge clippers, he surely can sell salvation.

Just seeing a SubGenius flyer with a screaming banner such as "THE WORLD ENDS TOMORROW AND YOU MAY DIE!" or the proclamation that "YOU'D *PAY* TO KNOW WHAT YOU *REALLY* THINK," the skeptical reader might brush it aside as just another bunch of cranks. However, that same flyer might have information about an upcoming SubGenius revival (or "De-vival"), wherein Sub-Geniuses mingle, talk "Bob," witness rituals such as Launching the Bloody Head of Arnold Palmer, listen to and participate in rants given by church members, and maybe enjoy the soothing sounds of Doktors for "Bob"—sort of like what a Star Trek convention would be if someone slipped mescaline into the complimentary space punch. Or the flyer might recommend a reading of the church's official "horror bible," *The Book of the SubGenius*. All are activities that help those involved get "Slack," the nirvana of the SubGenius. But the clincher the flyer might include—what assures you they're serious about this—is the request for a donation. Twenty dollars will buy a church membership and ordainment, which includes certain "documents" and other assorted trinkets, not to mention "such privileges that befit priesthood in a secret society of this scope."

Accordingly, some might consider the church a vehicle for squeezing money out of zombie-like followers . . . and they would be right. However, while The Church of the SubGenius might be "one of the fastest growing new faiths in the U.S. today"—it easily whips Eckankar, Elvis fan clubs, the Republican Party and other lesser gods in the pantheon of sleazy religion—not everyone involved is making a killing off of "Bob."

Illustration by St. Rick Hoefle. Inset: Photograph of President Reagan and George Bush with "Bob" head.

The SubGeniuses are able to stage revivals everywhere from Dallas to San Francisco to New York; they put out a radio show heard on non-commercial stations across the country; and they pick up some operating costs from membership fees and from sales of their magazine, *The Stark Fist of Removal*, yet only a small, shadowy cabal of original pulpiteers are enjoying the wealth that "Bob" hath wrought, and they intend on keeping it. A SubGenius amusement park isn't likely, nor will this scenario occur any time soon: A South American soccer stadium is filled with 80,000 *campesinos* who thought they were going to hear Jimmy Swaggart rail against everything that feels good, and as the interpreter, who follows Swaggart around like a *doppelgänger*, translates his fury the crowd shouts back "HAY-SUS! HAY-SUS!" right on cue. But instead of Swaggart it's a SubGenius Doctor, Pope or Saint on stage spewing forth Bobspeak such as "REPENT BEFORE THE RUPTURE," or "LEASE YOUR SOUL TO "BOB" FOR SAFEKEEPING—WATCH THE INTEREST GROW AND GROW."

But, then, maybe only some sharp suits and showbiz connections are keeping the SubGeniuses from telling "Bob's" Holy Jokes in Third World countries.

The Joke—it's what puts each member in cahoots with the other. SubGenius dogma is a vicious swipe at everything you've been led to believe is sacrosanct, such as God, a good job, your own intelligence. And if you're

a SubGenius then you're in on the joke. But the church founders are not joking around. Only those that don't truly understand the Word O' "Bob"—they're referred to as "Pinks" or "Bobbies" by other SubGenii—think it's all for laughs. There actually is a layer of seriousness underneath the monkeyshine veneer, an element of good old-fashioned preaching that uses The Joke to attract attention before laying on the heavy stuff—a killing joke.

From *The Book of the SubGenius*, chapter one, titled "Don't Laugh":

"IS THIS SOME KIND OF JOKE?"

"Well, if you thought this church was a joke, then you'll by God NEVER 'GET' THE PUNCHLINE.

"Oh, we're the first to admit that we deliver far more laughs and yuks per dollar than Scientology, the Unification Church, or *any* other religious group, except for *possibly* the Southern Baptists. But they are *for* BRAIN-DEATH. We are *against* braindeath. That would put a damn *bounty* on our heads except that we tread the thin tightwire of the jokes *just enough* not to have been killed *or bought*. MY GOD, look what they did to any of our predecessors that kept *straight faces*.

"No, this is NO joke, NO parody. Only the *foulness* of your programming keeps you from believing we have thousands of members, nationwide revivals, radio shows, and so on. But we do.

"Not only are we not kidding, but we'll even *piss you off*. Indeed, that's our JOB—our CALLING—our MISSION. We're going to shock the hell out of every man, woman and child of this planet. It's a big job, and we only have until 1998 to do it."

They're as serious as Jehovah's Witnesses pushing Watchtowers.

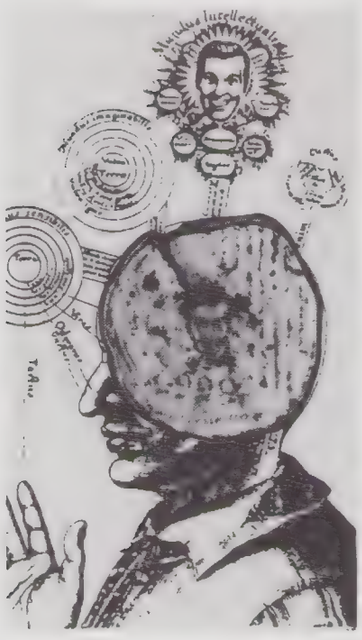


Illustration of Sub Genius thinker. Inset: Tortilla with miraculous apparition of "Bob" face and number (999), discovered on tortilla of humble Mexican woman June 15, 1963, in Plano, Texas

*A HAJJ TO "BOB"*

Dallas, a shining beacon deep in the spleen of Texas, and international corporate headquarters for The SubGenius Foundation: I went there to talk with the Rev. Ivan Stang, Philosopher Ekstaticus, Sacred Scribe, and one of few who allege a direct hotline to "The Man Who Could Sell Anything": J.R. "Bob" Dobbs.

I had an address that I was able to get from a West Coast SubGenius who claimed to know Rev. Stang, but that was all that I had. The church hierarchy shuns publicity and rarely grants interviews; so, I had no reason to believe that Stang would be willing to talk.

Once inside the city limits, I stopped at a convenience store to get beer. I drove slowly through downtown. The street was easy enough to find. I was expecting a residence, probably an apartment above a storefront, yet this street looked solely commercial. And then I saw it: a towering, gleaming spire of glass and metal, a huge, featureless monolith that practically hummed—a damned office building. I went inside.

"I'm looking for an Ivan Stang," I said to the woman commanding the information booth.

"Who?" she shot back.

"Ivan Stang, the, uh, SubGenius Foundation."

"Oh, another one." She rolled her eyes and scowled, "Eighth floor."

"You don't say. Which room?"

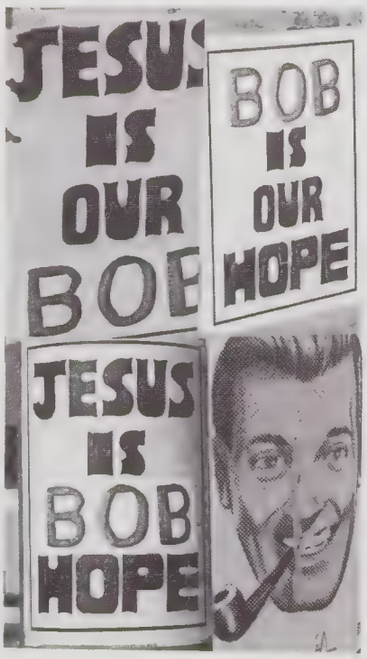
Without looking up, she blurted, "Suite 999."

A sign on the door of suite 999, in large letters and addressed to the janitor, read: DO NOT CLEAN. I opened the door and found out why: pamphlets, books, VCRs, reel-to-reels, beer cans, graven images of "Bob" and whatever else lay beneath made the place almost impassable. I maneuvered my way to the back, not sure if anyone was around. In the rear office, a spacious room with a panoramic view of downtown, sat Rev. Stang. He was listening to a tape of The Swinging Love Corpses and cleaning his gun.

"Ivan Stang?" I asked.

"Yeah."

"I'd like to talk with you about the church. I have beer."




Photographs of "Bob" street propaganda by Rev. Bob Lee and Dr. Alice

Stang immediately launched into a rap: "Well, we were sitting around last time I was in San Francisco and Paul [Mavrides, a.k.a. Lies] and I were saying, 'Well, we've done several of these revivals now, and we've even killed off Bob twice' [controversial assassinations that made "Bob" a martyr], and we were thinking, 'What next?' And we decided that obviously we needed to get into assertiveness training and motivational seminars, ones that go on for days and where people have to pay like fifty bucks to get in, and it starts off with this weird positive thinking thing and then within a few hours they're all starting to say, 'Hey, wait a minute! I thought this was all a joke.' And by the end it turns into something like Jonestown, or est, where you can't talk, you can't smoke, you can't pee, and there's these tough guys and bouncers all around and these plants in the audience who would freak out after the first twenty-four hours and just go berserk and look like people who have really gotten pissed off. That's what we'll probably do next. Instead of preachers we'll be screaming assholes."

Someone else enters the room. Stang introduces me to a collaborator.

"What else?" I asked.

"We've got the movie," Stang said. "It's about two hours long, and it's like The Book of the SubGenius in a way. It's partly narrated, partly live revival stuff . . . it's got collages, found footage and answers to all questions. It's called *Arise—SubGenius Video, The Movie*. I'll show you some of it."

We settled in for the viewing, and I remembered about the beer. "I've got a couple of six-packs down in the car. I'll go get it."

"No, I've got something better," Stang said. "Hold on."

He left the room, then returned with three glasses of strange, viscous liquid of an indescribable color. It seemed to glow. Being in the mood for a cocktail, I grabbed one of the glasses and quaffed down half of the contents.

"Hey, what is this stuff?" I asked, while coughing and wheezing.

With a mean grin on his face, Stang uttered sharply: "Frop."

I don't remember anything after that.

# VIS À VIS ZSA ZSA

Mary Akashah

*Beauty as an art form? Personality as a profession? Glamor as a lifestyle? It needs no elaboration. Say, simply, "Zsa Zsa".*

*MARY AKASHAH: You're well known as a great beauty, and of course you have a successful career as an actress and comedienne. What do you consider your greatest asset?*

ZSA ZSA GABOR: My sense of humor. Without it, I don't see how you can survive. The hard times can be so difficult to take, but a sense of humor really helps. Really.

*MA: Your sense of humor is apparent in almost everything you do—television guest shows, talk shows, game shows. Does it bother you that some people seem to take this to mean you're not very serious?*

ZZ: I know they do that and, yes, it does bother me. I got very upset the other day when I was being interviewed in New York. I was so surprised at Mariette Hartley because she is a woman and she should know that this is really an act, you know? An actress has to have a sort of gimmick. But comedians are usually very serious people, and people who know me in life take me pretty seriously, really. Only very stupid people would think that somebody else who makes jokes is stupid. So those people, I don't give a damn what they think about me.

**Zsa Zsa Gabor by Isabel Snyder.** Garmenture: Rubin Panis. Hair: Julius Bengtsson. Makeup: Nina Wells. Los Angeles, 1987

*MA: In large part, it's your sense of humor which led you to your success.*

ZZ: Yes. You know how my success started? I was on a talk show! I was not an actress, and my husband was George Sanders, and his brother asked me if I would like to be a guest on a talk show. And I had never been in front of a camera or anything, but Mother was living in Los Angeles and she said, "The American girls said you were beautiful," and she talked me into it. And I went. It was a call-in show, and my first question was that silly joke about if you break up your engagement after he gave you a car, a house, a stove, a ring—"give back the stove!" I got that just out of the top of my head. And I said a couple of silly jokes like that. And this woman called in and said, "My husband is a traveling salesman, but when he doesn't travel, he is also not at home. What should I do?" And I said, "Well, shoot him in the leg." And this idiotic joke became world-famous! And that's how I started my career. A week later MGM put me in *Moulin Rouge*, and from then on I worked forever—learned how to act in front of the camera. But I really started my whole career with my sense of humor, because people loved me after those remarks, and that's how the studios became conscious of me.

*MA: Were you frightened, never having that sort of thing before?*

ZZ: Oh my God, I died! But then when the lights went on, it just came automatically. Still, now, when the lights go on, it's beautiful. Yesterday I did *Truth or Consequences*—you know, told jokes and all—and I felt, "Oh my God, I can't do it!" Then the lights went on. It was wonderful! I think I was born to be a comedienne, an actress. Really.

*MA: You've worked in a great many things.*

ZZ: I've done so much. I played *Forty Carats* all over the country and on Broadway for a year. I made just now a picture in Germany, in German, called *Johann Strauss: The Man Who Almost Was King*. I worked even in *Horror On Elm Street*, and the *Los Angeles Times* said I was the best in the show. So I work all the time!

*MA: You must! It's early morning and you've been working already.*

ZZ: I do work very hard, darling, yes. I run my business. You know, I have a cosmetics firm now, and we're starting a new jewelry business. And next week I'm writing a book! I have a photo spread tomorrow, and Thursday I have an interview with some television people who are coming out from New York. Then Friday I'm doing a layout for a Spanish magazine. Last week I had a television show in New York, and when I came back I did the *Larry King Show* on Thursday, and Saturday I did *Truth or Consequences*. I really do work all the time!

*MA: Do you have so much energy?*

ZZ: And last week I was also in London doing a big television show there! So, yes, I have the energy. And I love it. And I also horseback ride and show my horses.

*MA: Yes. You compete, don't you?*

ZZ: Yes. I won five championshops in the last year, and I rode in the Olympics. And also I opened the International Horse Show in Washington, D.C., eight days in a row. I adore it.

*MA: When people think of you, they think of your beauty. How do* you *define beauty?*

ZZ: I think a really beautiful person is also beautiful inside. But, just physically, I like someone who isn't overdone, and who has, well, beauty. And also I admire all the dark-haired women because I'm so damn blond!

*MA: What are your beauty secrets?*

ZZ: Exercise, eat intelligently, and don't be bitchy. I think, with bitchy people, it shows on their faces, really. And also enviousness. That gets you no place, when you are jealous of somebody else. Then you can't achieve anything. The best thing is to try to make yourself better.

*MA: You're not jealous by nature, then.*

ZZ:Not really. Well, yes, when I'm married to a man and I love him, yes. But not of other women in general. I'm not envious.

*MA: What other advice would you give?*

ZZ: Use a cream at an early age. I have a cream I'm putting on the market now called "My Formula", and Mother put it on us already when we were ten years old because, with the sun and everything, you need a cream, just a light cream, that keeps your skin very moist.

*MA: That seems a very young age. Most women don't start until much later.*

ZZ: I know. In America they wait longer to use a cream, but not in Europe.

*MA: Do you think American women are behind European women in such matters?*

ZZ: Not really, but American women think if they put make-up on, that covers everything. And that's really not the case. You have to have underneath. Now, of course, people have started to become very conscious about it—it's underneath the make-up that counts. Then you can be beautiful.

*MA: What advice would you give a young person to help her grow?*

ZZ: As advice, I would say again that she should exercise. Play all the sports and do the life of a tomboy . . . ice skating, playing hockey, fencing, horseback riding . . . everything. That, I think, is very good for the mind also, because when you do the sports you have to so much concentrate on them that you don't think about the other excitements and what other kids might be trying to do, like drugs and sex.

*MA: Is there anything you would tell her specifically not to do?*

ZZ: What not to do? Not to get married as many times as I did!

*MA: Yet you always say your marriages were rewarding experiences for you.*

ZZ: Yes. I married wonderful men, so it was rewarding, yes. But I came from Europe, from Hungary, and it was so war-torn and everything. It was a different case. Today, really, people live together, so they don't have to get married so much.

*MA: You've said you don't really agree with the idea of live-in relationships.*

ZZ: No, I personally don't. I like to be married to the man I love.

*MA: Are you sorry you married as many times as you did?*

ZZ: Not really. Just when the newspapers make such silly remarks about it. But I married probably the most wonderful people. Every one of them I love and like, so I didn't make any mistakes. Maybe I could have been a little bit less impulsive and waited a little longer—not get so fast a divorce, you know? But I always had so much temptation, and it's very difficult to resist temptation.

*MA: Temptation was always there for you.*

ZZ: There was always another fantastic man, you know, who actually sounded much better and much more giving, in love and everything, than the one I already had. But then when you marry them, definitely it's not the case. Darling, they're all alike.

*MA: Do you think so?*

ZZ: Oh, I do think so.

*MA: Women often say that men are somewhat underdeveloped emotionally.*

ZZ: Well, men are not as developed as we are, that's for sure. They are much more children. But I don't know what we are supposed to do about it, because we all need a man. It's very sad for a woman to live without a man, I think.

*MA: Where do women most make their mistakes with men?*

ZZ: In marriage or in divorce?! But really, most women take over. They are very masculine nowadays, you know? They try to take the man over and tell him what to do, and I don't think a man likes it. And we could do it so they don't know it. We could still tell them what to do and they wouldn't know it.

*MA: It takes a lot of time and energy to do things that way.*

ZZ: Yes, it does. *Marriage* takes a lot of energy, darling.

*MA: I was married to an Arab man . . .*

ZZ: Oh my God!

*MA: . . . and I know your first husband was Turkish . . .*

ZZ: Yes. I was married to a Turk once, and that is very difficult. A Turk you cannot take over.

*MA: I found it exhausting.*

ZZ: In what way?!

*MA: Every way. There was nothing else you could think about except how to please him.*

ZZ: Yes. And that's very bad. Of course, I was only sixteen when I was married to a Turk, so I was just a child. Probably *that* pleased him!

*MA: You have a very glamorous image and a very glamorous life. Do you feel you've paid a high price for this?*

ZZ: Well, we all pay a high price for things that we really like, but I'm pretty satisfied with it.

*MA: What price do you feel you paid?*

ZZ: Well, the divorces and marriages . . . I mean, divorce is a very heartbreaking thing. That's having to pay the price, as you said. It's always very, very

lonely after you divorce somebody. It's a sad thing. And I never divorced with hatred, or—and this is one thing—with alimony. Alimony, I never asked of them. And all my men I divorced, they remain my friends, and sometimes I wonder should I have divorced or not, you know?

*MA: Do you ever feel guilty about it?*

ZZ: Not really . . . not really. And if I do, I don't admit it! Ever! You should never admit if you are guilty!

*MA: One thing that impresses me, when I read about your life, is your strength in adversity. With the war, the leaving Hungary, the divorces, the struggle to build a career and be self-supporting, there was a lot of adversity in your life. Where do you find the strength not to become depressed?*

ZZ: Well, I *am* sometimes depressed. Everybody gets sometimes depressed. But you have to get *out* of that. When I get depressed I try to do even more sports, and to go more and more with friends, and they sort of automatically get you out of it. People who are depressed are really so sorry for themselves, and that's really bad. You have to try again. You have to better your luck.

*MA: That takes more strength than some people have.*

ZZ: And that's very sad. The only thing to do is to walk, and swim, play tennis, or do *something*. And, of course, work. The only best way to get out of depression is to work.

*MA: Work seems to be your cure-all. You supported yourself, even when it wasn't fashionable.*

ZZ: All my life, darling.

*MA: Do you think it's hard for a man to handle a woman with a successful career?*

ZZ: Well, today I think he can. Of course, that's if the man is successful also. If the man is not successful it is *very* difficult for him to take a woman with a good career because men, I think, are very delicate. Most women aren't.

*MA: Do you think women are stronger than men?*

ZZ: I think so.

*MA: That's a touchy issue!*

ZZ: And it will be as long as the world goes on. The man wants to be the stronger party, and they really believe they are! And my opinion is we should let them believe it.

*MA: Do you think so?*

ZZ: Yes, but *we* should know that it's not so!

*MA: Why do you prefer letting them believe it, to trying to change their minds?*

ZZ: Because we would take away their pride and their mannishness. And the man has to be masculine. He has to be, you know, the man.

*MA: In that case, do you think the Women's Movement has done more harm or good?*

ZZ: Harm, definitely. Lots of harm to *us*—not to the man, but to women.

*MA: In what way?*

ZZ: Well, because a man now considers us equal, and now we should go out and work, and we just bring home the money, and we are not anymore the little woman who needs to stay home and be taken care of. The woman who used to be at home and be taken care of was just as strong as we are now. Wheeling and dealing we did before, but it wasn't so obvious.

*MA: You wrote a very humorous book called* How to Catch a Man, How to Keep a Man, How to Get Rid of a Man.

ZZ: My joke book.

*MA: Yes, and it's cleverly written in English, which is not your first language.*

ZZ: No. I speak five languages, and English is the fifth, the last. You know, I was educated in the best schools, and I hope I'm intelligent. I don't think you can survive without intelligence. And you know, sometimes I wonder, when I see a man who has this dumb-looking blonde, and she's doing so well with her life . . . maybe men like dumb women. I really don't know.

*MA: You're still not sure about that?*

ZZ: I think I am. Yes, I think most men like dumb women. I don't mean wonderful, intelligent guys, but most men like dumb women because they feel superior. And women who play those real dumb blondes are usually the brightest ones themselves.

*MA: The idea that beautiful women have to be stupid . . .*

ZZ: Well, that's a very long time ago gone. That doesn't exist. Beautiful women are intelligent because a woman can *make* herself beautiful, you know? That means that beauty isn't just how you were born. You have to know how to dress, you have to know what kind of make-up to use, how to talk, how to *be*. To do that you must be intelligent already. For example, Marilyn Monroe, who always seemed so, well, not too bright . . . I'm sure she was a very bright woman because look how far she went.

*MA: Do you believe in astrology?*

ZZ: Not too much. I believe it when it's good for me. When it's bad for me I don't believe it. I'm a born optimist! I hate it when they say bad things. You know, Marlene Dietrich, I heard somewhere, wouldn't even take a plane or anything when they said it was a bad day for her.

*MA: So you ignore it, and get on the plane anyway?*

ZZ: I just don't look at it too much. I believe in fate, darling, but not in astrology.

*MA: You believe things are predestined, then.*

ZZ: I think so. Of course, you make your own fate. If you sit home and are lazy, then you never achieve anything. But I believe if you have energy—you can make yourself energy, you know, if you are not sitting around just brooding or being home or being jealous of other people, but instead decide that *you* can do it, that you *must* do it—then you can make your own fate.

*MA: That takes courage.*

ZZ: Well, that I have. You must. Without courage you can't achieve anything. When I started that first movie, *Moulin Rouge* . . . Today I don't think I would have dared! They were all very seasoned big stars and actors; and I got this very big part because I looked like Jane Avril, and I didn't know anything about acting. And I still dared to go before all these people and be an actress! And I did it well, in the end.

*MA: So you dare to try . . .*

ZZ: Yes. Oh, when I did *Forty Carats* . . . Julie Harris had finished doing *Forty Carats*, and Mr. Merrick decided he wanted me. And I could never understand why, because Julie Harris is such a wonderful actress, and I said, "I have nothing in the world in common with her!" But it was, "Never mind, you will do it." And then on opening night it was like being *novocained*, I was so scared! But then, slowly, it was wonderful, and played all around America to rave notices.

*MA: I'm impressed with your daring. I've read how badly your parents wanted a boy, and your mother often said she was the prettiest and most talented in the family, that she gave up her career for her children. Some people coming from that would grow up with a very low self-image.*

ZZ: Well, I left my house when I was about eleven-and-a-half years old, when I was sent to Switzerland for school. Our mother was very anxious for us to be somebody. She was one of those types of women who always tells you . . . Well, for example, I was not wanting to go to London two weeks ago, and she said, "But go! You never know what is coming out of it!" And she was right. I went. She's a wonderful, intelligent woman. Did you read her book?

*MA: Yes.*

ZZ: The book I didn't like. I think it was awful, and all my sisters, too. It wasn't well-written, and it's not really her, not really Mother.

*MA: It must have been difficult to pull yourself together sometimes. Coming out of the war, the problems in Hungary, living in a new country . . .*

ZZ: Well, then I was a little girl. That doesn't count.

*MA: It doesn't?*

ZZ: No. When you are very young, when you are about fifteen, everything . . . Well, I guess I was strong then, too, now that I think of it, but even so, when you are very young it is easier. You don't have the responsibility, and you don't worry about things. You just worry about your little sweater and skirt, that's all. That's the way it is when you are very young, I think.

*MA: It's like that, isn't it?*

ZZ: I think so. And I was really very beautiful then . . .

*MA: Youth is a very special time.*

ZZ: Anyhow, my mother always told us, "If you want it, you can get it." And we were all raised like that, and I think we were always sure that we could get it.

*MA: Do you think that's an important lesson?*

ZZ: Very. It was lots more difficult for me with my child because, you know, as famous as I was, she was always pushed sort of a little bit back, and that hurt her a little bit. It's so difficult to be in the shadow of a famous mother. But now she's starting to come out of it. She's starting to make stand-up comedy.

*MA: Of all the things you've done, what are you most proud of?*

ZZ: Well, you see, I am not a conceited person, so it's hard to say. I do love theatre—I adore it. But I have so many things to do at the same time I never know which I'm proudest of. Of course, I am very, very happy when I get a good notice, although sometimes I prefer not to read them because they can be so nasty. I have had bad notices, but for an actress, that goes with being an actress. I do sometimes get upset when they think I'm just an empty-headed, dumb blonde, which I very often played, very naturally, at the beginning. At the beginning they loved me in that type of role.

*MA: What kind of work is the most fun for you?*

ZZ: Well, again, I love the theatre. But then, I love movies too. I must say, whatever I do, I enjoy. Thank God I only do what I want to do! Television is also wonderful. Sometimes it's a disaster, but it's fun with a good show. And theatre, again, is the best feeling, because with theatre you keep the audience in your hands. You know when you make them laugh, you know when they are going to cry, and you know, "Now, on my next three lines, they are going to roll with laughter." And that's a wonderful feeling, the contact with people.

*MA: If you could play any role in history, what would it be?*

ZZ: I have always wanted to play Catherine the Great. I think that would be a wonderful part for me. We still haven't been able to get it together, but one day I will do it.

*MA: Would you consider producing it yourself?*

ZZ: Well, I wouldn't know how to do that, because I'm very, very bad with business things. That's one thing I really don't know how to do. Everybody cheats me, and I hate that, but it takes so much time to be really a business woman and pay attention to that, that sometimes I think it really isn't worth it. For me, I mean. Of course it's worth it and wonderful if you can do it. But I think if you are a business woman you can't be an artist. Artists and business don't go, really, together, and some of the artists who get really rich are the ones who were lucky, that's all. They invested in the right thing and their business manager gave good advice. I don't think many real artists are interested. I mean, I paint, too. I love to paint. People who are really artistic and love something gorgeous to look at, they don't have time and they get bored with business.

*MA: You've been painting since you were a child, haven't you?*

ZZ: Yes, since then.

*MA: Do you show your paintings, or is this something you do just for yourself?*

ZZ: No, I don't show them, not lately. I don't have time to *live*! But I really should do that. My daughter keeps telling me I should.

*MA: You also like to write, don't you?*

ZZ: Well, I've written already two books. I've written always, since I was a little girl.

*MA: Do you keep a journal?*

ZZ: No, no. It's all in my head! But seriously, I'm working on a book now, and I'm sure it's going to be very good.

*MA: What's it about?*

ZZ: It's about my life, and all the mistakes and not-mistakes; about excitement and all the interesting people I've met, not only in America but all over the world. Stories and anecdotes about all these things.

*MA: If you could be reincarnated, who would you like to come back as? Do you believe in such things?*

ZZ: I don't know. I would like to believe in it, because it's a wonderful feeling. You know, I had a little shitsu, a dog called Genghis Khan. He was a gorgeous little dog, and I adored him. And I always thought, "If I come back, I'd like to come back like Genghis Khan, because he has the best life in the whole world." And then he died of cancer at the age of nine, so I don't want to come back as Genghis Khan! I laugh, but really it was terrible. Such a heartbreak. That little Genghis Khan was so close to me, and I loved him so much. I never, never want to love anything like I loved him. It's the biggest pain in the world.

*MA: We talked about newspapers sometimes printing things you would find silly. What do you wish people would ask you that they usually don't?*

ZZ: I don't know. I know I don't like it when they ask my age. And they always put in a different age! By now I don't even tell my age, because it's nobody's business, and for some reason they love to make me older. I don't know why—it's a stupid thing. You know, I'm often in Germany, because my husband is German, and you should see how old they make me there! Maybe they are just very bitchy and jealous people—not the Germans, I mean the newspaper people—but it makes me not want to go there because I don't want to be upset all the time.

*MA: If they're jealous, maybe you should be glad. It means they think they don't look as good as you do!*

ZZ: That's a good way to look at it! Surely I'm not that young anymore but I'm not *that* old, either. And the thing that makes it really interesting is that they make him always younger, and me always older. I guess they think the Germans don't age! *(laughing)* They just wither away!

*MA: If you were interviewing Zsa Zsa Gabor, what would you ask? What would you consider important in her life?*

ZZ: When I think it over now, I think it's important that I had a wonderful mother, with very good advice. Although she never gives advice, everything she says is an advice almost, indirectly. And I have a very good family—I love my daughter, who most of the time is impossible, of course. And I adore my horse, I love to ride. And I love my animals. And I'm very proud of my career because, as we said, I never studied to be an actress, I just became an actress because I went on that talk show.

*MA: In your autobiography you quote an interesting proverb which goes: "Beauty with good fortune is a blessing, but beauty without good fortune is a curse."*

ZZ: Well, it's true, but darling *anything* without good fortune is a curse, let's face it. Good fortune is very important. *Luck* is very important.

*MA: What would you like to do that you haven't done yet?*

ZZ: Oh my—I've done almost everything!

*MA: So it seems!*

ZZ: Yes, well, I haven't been terribly rich yet, which would be wonderful. Just once I would like to go to one of the really chic department stores and buy six or ten dresses without asking the price.

*MA: Just something nice!*

ZZ: But one can get tired of that, too. You have to have something else, and in my life it's achievement. Like my horse winning a championship with me on him, and these girls who are twenty years old are competing against me. They practice the whole day, while I have so little time to ride or to exercise with the horse—and then I win! And I don't win because I'm Zsa Zsa Gabor. I win mainly because the horse is so wonderful, but also because I am the one on the horse. And *that* is an achievement. *That* is a great feeling.

*MA: A real triumph.*

ZZ: You know, in the Olympics, the day before they started we had rehearsing, and when we had to come out there was such a chaos! And my horse is a very jittery horse, and he threw me. I hurt my wrist very badly. In the middle of the night I woke up in terrible pain, and I called the doctor, saying, "I can't stand it!" They had to put it in a cast the same night. But at seven o'clock I was out there with the cast on, riding five days in a row. I wouldn't have given up the Olympics for *anything*! And that I am proud of, that I dared to do that.

*MA: That really was an achievement.*

ZZ: That is guts, you know? And for a sportswoman . . . oh my God . . . to ride in the Olympics—that is the biggest thing in the world.

*MA: Do you wish you had more time for sports?*

ZZ: Sports are very important. The trouble is, I work so much I don't have the time. But I *love* the work. And the money, of course. Let's face it, darling, I have to pay my own bills. I've supported myself all my life. That makes me very proud, though, because there must be nothing worse than to ask a man for a thousand dollars, or a hundred dollars—anything. Oh, God forbid, that must be the world's worst!

*MA: What would you most like people to remember you by?*

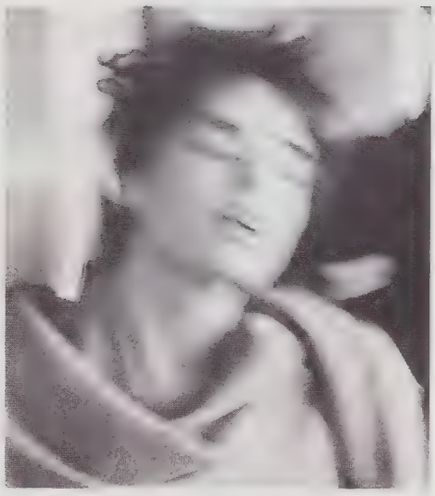
ZZ: That I lived my life with a sense of humor, and that I was always there to help people if I could. You know, if someone asks me for something and I can do it, I will do it. That's very important.

*MA: Let's hope that's what they'll remember.*

ZZ: *(Pause)* They'll probably remember me as a dizzy blonde, I think.

*MA: Do you? You don't think they'll consider what it took to build your career?*

ZZ: Well, that's a sweet thought, so let's hope they will. It's not easy to be remembered as a stupid blonde. That I would hate. *(Pause)* Oh, I would *hate* to be remembered as a stupid blonde.



*AND THE SPIRIT AND THE BRIDE SAY COME . . .*

PHOTOS
LAUREN SOROKIN

GARMENTS
YOHJI YAMAMOTO

ART DIRECTION REIKO CLARK MAKE-UP & HAIR JOANNE DIPRIMA

**Marc Chagall, *Snowing*, 1939,** gouache on cardboard, 26 1/2 × 20 1/4 in. Collection of the St. Louis Art Museum

## *A PRESENT FOR CHAGALL*

*Joyce Dalton*

***Inspired by the painting,* Snowing, *elementary school-children's vignettes commemorate his 100th birthday.***

In a small town in Russia lived a very famous fiddler and his pet friend. They brought joy and music back to his town.

It happened when Czar Miser took all sounds away from the town. He locked them in a glass container until everybody agreed to pay double taxes. Since nobody would pay, Czar Miser kept the sounds and forbid any music.

It just so happened that the fiddler and his pet came to play music for the town. When he started the first note, Czar Miser's guards took the fiddler's strings away and sent the musician and his pet to jail.

The fiddler was a strong man and therefore broke the bars with ease but did not escape without injury. That's why his left hand is swollen and his right hand can't hold the bow.

The fiddler and his pet found out where the sounds were kept. The fiddler threw himself on the glass container, shattering it to let the trapped sounds fill the air once again.

Now the fiddler's pet is sprinkling the sounds over the town. The fiddler has cuts from shattering the glass to let the music and sound come out. He pretends to play his violin even though he doesn't have strings.

*Shaun Loh*

He goes around from house to house, telling and singing stories.

His magic bow and fiddle amuse children and bring them joy.

The spirit above him is special; imagination is its name. It follows him wherever he goes; without it, the great storyteller wouldn't be great at all.

*Julia Ragen*

One day in Russia my father said to me, "Have you ever seen the fiddler and his friend, the flyer?"

I replied, "No."

Next my father said, "Tonight, he comes to all the people and he plays beautiful music on his violin. While he plays, his friend, the flyer, brings toys to all the good children of Russia."

In a couple of hours my father and I were on our roof waiting. While we looked out, we saw hundreds of people standing on their roofs waiting for him. Suddenly, we heard the sound of a violin. It was the fiddler and he was playing wonderful music.

As I listened, the flyer dropped a toy right into my arms.

*Francesco Peta*

Fiddler walks through the streets
Playing songs for whomever he meets;
'Long come Flyer, green with envy.
Rips the strings into shreds.
Fiddler keeps on playing.
"Why do you play with no strings?"
"My songs are in my heart, not in my hand."
So Fiddler played a lovely tune
And Flyer danced all afternoon.

*Leah Sugarman*

The Big Man
standing on
a field of white.
With a dressed idol
in his sight.
The sound of
wind blowing so clear;
with crisp flakes
of snow
Covering the little town.

*Paul Kates*

The flying monster is coming!
He's scaring all the people.
The warning bell is ringing
High up in the steeple.
Quick! Get the violinist
To calm him down.
To ease his sorrows
And to change his frown.
Please calm him down,
Oh great fiddle player.
Make him go away,
And we'll make you mayor.

*David Zuverink*

"The Dragon Fly's coming!" people yelled. "Run, run to your houses. Lock your doors. Shut the windows. Close your shades," the people yelled and screamed.

The village people thought the large thing they called the Dragon Fly was going to attack. But the creature only asked for food and a musician to play for him. He said, "People who are hiding, please come out; I am not evil. I only ask for food and someone to play music for me. You see, I love music and I get lonesome without someone to play for me. I'm human, donkey and fly. Please help me," he begged.

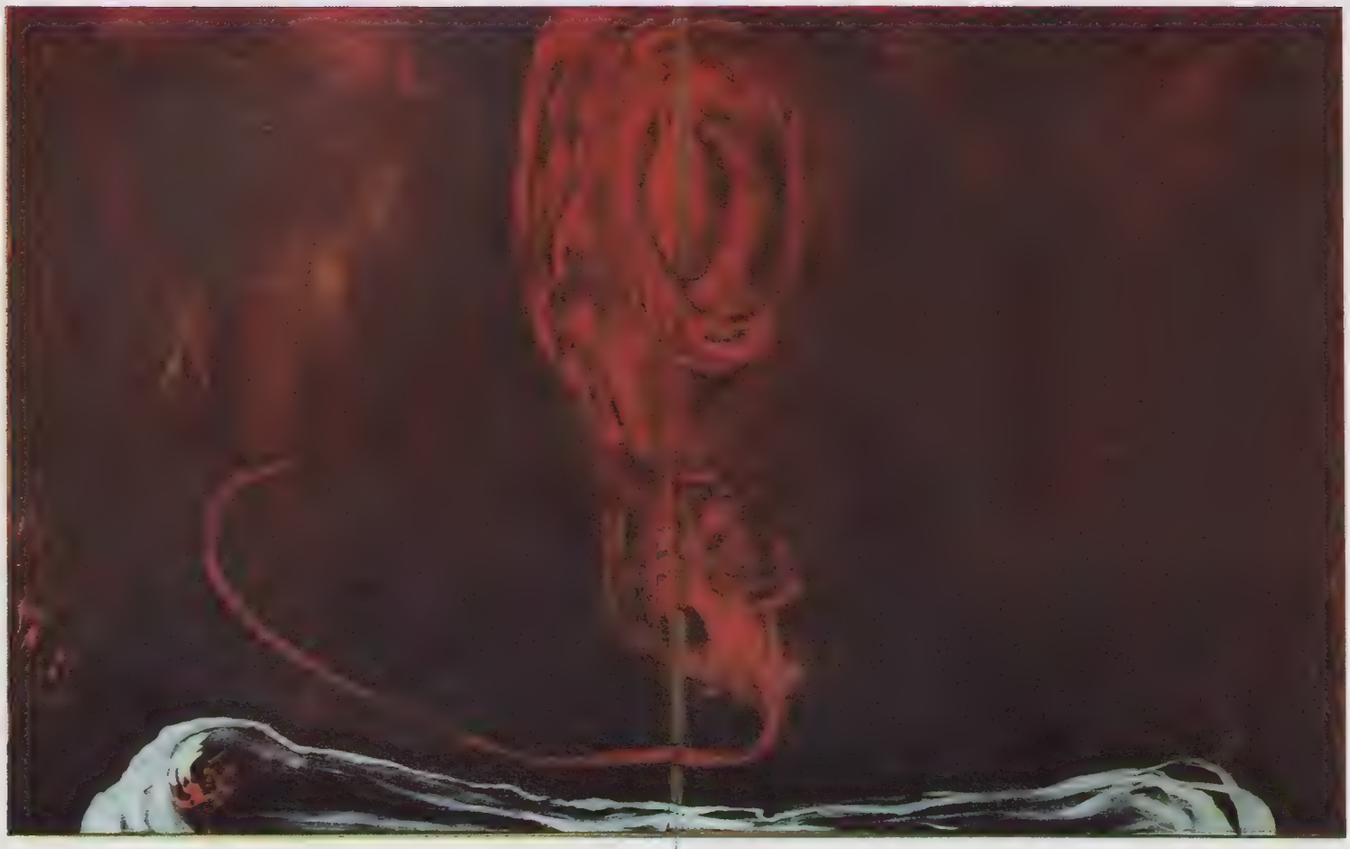
Then a beautiful tune ran through that whole village. "What's that?" everyone wondered.

"Village people, come out; do not judge something by the looks of its outside, but by the looks of its inside," the musician said.

All the village people came out. The governor said, "Dear creature, I'm sorry but we are very poor and do not have musicians."

The musician said, "Well, then, creature, come with me and together we shall seek new lands and adventures." The village people said good-bye and went back into their houses.

*Dayhana Villalobos*



# ULTRANATURE: THE ART OF ROMBERG

*L.D. BLACK*

***From an Early Point of View*, 1986,** acrylic, charcoal and enamel on canvas, 48 × 60 in

previous page: ***When It Was Now*, 1986,** acrylic, charcoal and enamel on canvas, 60 × 96 in

Osvaldo Romberg's art is the charted itinerary of search. Each phase of his art and each painting are questions addressed to himself, artist, man and being, in a context of the timeline of history. Yet for all the introspection that such a process implies, he is neither aloof nor self-indulgent; for his work is tangibly and forcefully communicative, eloquent and revelatory, though its thrust is self-definition.

In most respects this is the art of a Romantic. With its inchoate images of human and galactic birth, with the colors of night, space, blood and water, the territories of nature are exaggerated as Albers' squares and Mondrian's grids are idealized geometrics that in nature are intimated. Romberg has the peculiar vision to see the Nature beyond nature, an *Ultranature* whose source is in the unconscious. Here is where nature meets memory; on a primordial plane of common origin that most recall only as the subtext to a dream. This is why his personal iconography is allusive rather than correlative: while his point of view is the philogenetic, his exposition is entirely his own. Romberg is something of a poet.

He is also something of a pedagogue. It is true that he has taught in the faculties of many universities, but his pedagogy is not essentially academic. Throughout most of the 1970s, Romberg was known for his analytic boards, enormous color classifications of the greatest paintings of pre-twentieth century art. But history was his impetus, not didacticism. In seeking to establish a system of art definition he was driven foremost by his own remembrances, so that in defining art in the vernacular he might also define himself as artist. For Romberg, history is tangible, art is etymological. And the analytic boards endure as hieroglyphics, transcribing the artwork in memory to the parallel media of biography and autobiography.

In the 1980s Romberg's art, but not his intention, modulated from the epic to the lyric. He says the change was catalyzed by personal mat-

***Tanakos and the Life Cycle*, 1986,** acrylic and charcoal on canvas, 60 × 96 in

ters including the birth of his son. Where the former work invites attention through historical fascination, the latter arrests attention by means of an unspecified but urgent familiarity. It is not unlike Rorschach's tests, these paintings that unlock the emotional quality of life's processes. They comment on all varieties of physical and psychic experience on a level unperceivable but through intuition, emotion and the inner eye. These are not occurrences that manifest in the external world, but the internal world which all people know but have not seen. This is the pictorialization of interiority. Not strictly surreal, neither descriptive nor abstract.

Romberg's colors, shapes and uncanny sources of light may begin in the physical world, but their destination is the supramundane. Most of the paintings are evocative of things voluptuously organic but they by no means end at the limits of tangibility. History still measures in the artist, but now it is a lifeline not a timeline. So often man must measure himself by culture before he dares to uncover his place in nature and its octave, the cosmos.

Prior to 1986 and after the analytic boards, Romberg's dominant motif was a monstrous chrysalis. Though non-representational it speaks not only of the incipience of things, but growth as well, and transformation, deformation and, by inference, death. In such paintings as *In the Name of The Father* and *David's Arrival*, the chrysalis functions as a verdant life/birth symbol, but achieves a totally different effect in *Mutation at Hydra*, where it looms deadly and belligerent, opposing the viewer in ominous greys and reds. Here, it is life and birth gone awry, no longer in control. But in one of the motif's last incarnations, *When It Was Now*, the blood-red, five foot high chrysalis is no longer so menacing since it is divorced, by virtue of color, from the context of earthly nature. The greens and greys are gone—life and decomposition—replaced by red, and the dark blues of space or the subterra-

***Bio-Desire II*, 1986,** acrylic, charcoal and enamel on canvas, 24×36 in

nean: death and transfiguration. It seems to arise, lifeline intact, above the white suggestion of a sepulchral shroud, and is reminiscent in composition, if not in shape, of El Greco's *Resurrection*.

The paintings of this period, such as *Tanakos and the Life Cycle*, are aggressive and confrontational. They are all the more disturbing because it is the inevitability of creation itself that dares to assert itself so boldly. This is the artist coming to grips with raw truth: from birth to death, from the womb to the grave and beyond.

Having explored culture, then nature, Romberg has succeeded in defining himself as artist and man. But he surpasses even this when he attempts to portray the essence of pure being.

By 1986 Romberg's paintings are crossing borders, and infused with a light whose source is not celestial, terrestrial nor artificial. In fact, the miracle of light is his main concern, and as with former concerns, the light is internal, familiar to the soul, not to the senses. And alit by this psychic light are landscapes of the interior. The message is clear and maybe unsettling: space is *inside*. Space is a psychic phenomenon.

The color black takes on a new function in these paintings; perhaps black is simply accentuated in the presence of so much light. Earlier, black was used primarily as painterly device. Now it appears, sui generis, as the color that forms itself. It is, in other words, no longer a mere element of the whole, or a shadow cast by something else. It exists of course with or without light, before or after. It is now the very form that light reveals.

These paintings, at a glance, glow with a wonderfully murky luminescence. The light, often pink, floats or shimmers like an aureole. It proceeds from no one place, it is simply emitted. So captured is the viewer by the radiant phenomenon that the forms, in muted black, are perceived slowly so it appears that they come into being before the eyes. Again the forms are nothing but inferences; but they touch a slen-

***The Light of Rachel*, 1986,** acrylic, charcoal and enamel on canvas, 48 × 60 in

der strand of recognition, departing as quickly, since there is nothing in reality in which they can be grounded. The sensation is similar to hypnagogic thoughts that dissolve with the onset of clear consciousness.

In such paintings as *Bio-Desire II* and *Blue Conspiracy*, the organic and inorganic meet. The contextual ambiguity is disconcerting since one is compelled to find orientation here and yet it is denied. In abstraction, no such compulsion exists. In surrealism, orientation simply shifts. But neither term applies to Romberg's work. It is, rather, inference without reference. And in being so creates its own terms for being.

*The Light of Rachel* is perhaps the apex of Romberg's painting thus far. In it all the elements of this recent phase coalesce. And somehow the complexion is serene. Disturbing images remain, but now they are held at bay. There is no sign of contention between the light and the dark, yet there is very much the notion that one resides along with the other: Where the light exists, all dark elements are suspended just beyond its scope.

Romberg is still the Romantic, but now less haunted by questions. One is disinclined ever to say that the seeker has discovered the meaning of his search, but when questions are replaced by answers, and the search goes on, another sort of evaluation is necessary. Since 1986, Romberg has gone onto what he calls hybrid pieces, three dimensional paintings on wood that further investigate the mysteries and possibilities of space. But one cannot help thinking that Romberg achieved a certain milestone in 1986. And that these palpable, poetic paintings, that yet defy tangency and poesy, are landmarks defining the perimeter that is yet to be filled by the artist.

# CARTE

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he has become a quintessential magician, able to leap convention and artifice, stretching for a seemingly impossible realm. The result is an occasional surrealist aura, a Marcel Duchamp type of situation where identity is repeatedly reinvented.

In this case, the life is built atop a foundation of illusion. In Weiss's vocabulary, reality and honesty aren't necessarily synonymous. As befits the man for whom Pinocchio is the ultimate totem, truth may or may not be an integral agent for survival. "Pinocchio represents to me the actor's dilemma, a philosophical dilemma. An actor can't be real. An actor has self-will, he's not taking direction. He has to submit, and it's a psychosexual thing, submission. Pinocchio is psychosexual in the aspect of helplessness, being manipulated, being raped. Pinocchio wants to be a real boy, because if he's a real boy, then he can feel. As soon as he becomes real, then he knows emotion, he knows pain. So to me the great tragedy of Pinocchio is that he gets his wish. It is supposed to be his triumph, but for me it represents that double bind—he got his wish, but now he's going to die. But I also like him because his nose grows."

There is a mystique about Jeff Weiss, one born from his offstage persona, his creative storytelling and his maniacally brilliant acting style. A search for answers merely unearths a larger array of fairy tales. Weiss seems proud of the indiscretions, proud of the bogus background he promulgates, and strangely satisfied that his litany of lies is so easily uncovered. Kierkegaard may lovingly call it "poetic remembering," but after awhile, nearly every sentence is suspect.

Weiss says, for example, that he once was married to a Hawaiian woman and has a 27-year-old son who is a body builder in Maui. No one else interviewed has ever heard him mention an ex-wife or son, however.

But once you know what Weiss is up to, the lies only remain important in how they inform his work.

"Theater represents for Carlos, and for me, a unique philosophical opportunity. Life, the moment, is always interesting. History lies. The sense of what history is, is interpretation, and as soon as you interpret it, you color it, and as soon as you color it, you lie. Theater represents the ultimate lie in the now."

And what of Carlos Ricardo Martinez, the man whom Weiss refers to as his "psychological, philosophical other"? There are those who see the partnership as being similar, interestingly, to the relationship between Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas. "To the man who requested that his name not appear on this program," Weiss wrote in one theater bill, "to whom I owe everything of innocence and beauty in this life. Sh! Dearest, the Commies are creeping all around us."

Weiss will tolerate nothing but the idea that Martinez is his sounding board, his soulmate, and his salvation. But it is Weiss who receives the accolades, Weiss who carries home the Obie Awards, Weiss who gets invited to emcee the Bessie Awards. It is also Weiss who carries on with the eccentricities. Despite the across-the-board raves for his performance as the Ghost, the Player King and Osric in the Liviu Ciulei production of *Hamlet* at the Public Theater, he is an actor who has neither pictures, a written resume, nor a telephone. Weiss says he found a note in his door that read, "If you want to be in *The Front Page* call this number." He called, he performed, he again reaped accolades. Then in the Spring, he nixed a proposal to appear in *Ironweed*, even though he admires its director, Hector Babenco, because he didn't want to appear with Meryl Streep.

Weiss's success comes in the form of collusion. In order to vacate the vacuum of the world he knows, he uses his virtuosity at pretense to self-generate theatrically. The audience can accept his words and actions onstage as gospel because what is a play if not a fabrication? The illusions spiral, the circles enmesh, the masquerade may or may not be real. And through it all, Weiss is in the business of self-disclosure.

"Carlos always said the problem with most actors is that they drag what they do onstage into their real life, and vice versa. In my case it was vice versa, dragging the actual things that happened to me, the interior landscape of the mind, on stage. For a few years in there—oh, I would say up to about 1969—the general opinion of me was that I was a drug addict or a schizophrenic. I mean, there were actually long articles on, 'This man is obviously insane, we know he's paranoid, he's this and he's that.' There was this idea that people would not be surprised if I actually attacked the audience. That it would not surprise them if I actually broke through the fourth wall."

Weiss creates the boundaries and, really, he chooses to do without them. He can


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*Bryan Miller, New York Times – April 10, 1987*

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*Gael Greene, New York Magazine – March 9, 1987*

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prance, provoke and pervert. He can utilize his chameleon-like behavior to fuel whatever deception he chooses, releasing the passion in a flurry of manipulation. If his emotional masturbation runs riot for hour upon hour, so be it—whomever wishes to witness the spectacle is welcome. The procedure is safe because a purpose is always at hand: Jeff Weiss will do anything to entertain. To Entertain, to be Caught In The Act, to take that one extra step to catch the audience offguard, to make them pay attention, to make them think, to make them be happy.

But let it not be forgot that Weiss, although his heart and soul harbor purity, gentleness and sincerity, is a master at manipulation. Offstage, during interviews, he acts ordinary, unassuming, even plain. He is polite, he is kind, he is a gentleman. He is able to address myriad subjects with intelligence, and listens intently. He is mezmerizing, and seems to understand your words on an emotional plane.

There's a kicker, though. For Weiss, reality may be nothing more than a self-perpetuating myth. Perhaps like the playwrights Luigi Pirandello and Jean Genet before him, he is a nexus between illusion and reality, off on a never-ending search for a way to widen the gray area where fantasy merges with reality. Weiss's mastery at the power of persuasion is so skillful that some might label him The Great Imposter. And with good reason. The line between his performance offstage and on is so finely drawn that it nearly ceases to separate at all. Instead, it sets up a series of questions and contradictions, an inversion of cause and effect—which comes first, the artist or the art?

From conversations, it would seem that this merging of reality and illusion provides his ultimate seduction. He is a man of contradictions by choice, and his vacillation may be what keeps his spirit in tune. The secret is that Weiss honors neither truth nor exposure. He is content in both his work and his life to let reality spin fast and furiously into fantasy, allowing the overlap to fall where it may.

Like the psychic who bends a spoon before an amazed audience, Weiss employs identical persuasive mental tools but insists on rearranging the complete set of silverware. Puckish and playful, he is a constant reminder that theater and life are a pair of absurdities, if not polyfantastical. With Weiss acting as a pivot, the incitement transforms into pure excitement.

## COPPOLA

lyrical mood. In my mind I tried all these experiments to delight everybody, not intending to screw them up. I don't think realism is essential when you're working on a feeling level. I'm an intuitive kind of character. I do a lot of my thinking through feeling. It's always been more reliable to think less analytically and more intuitively and more spatially. It's emotional arithmetic. A lot of times, I have made computations on a feeling level. Feelings are most important about the films I wish I could make.

*CR: How did* Rumble Fish *come about?*

FC: I was hot to do a personal movie and decided to do *Rumble Fish* after I met Susie Hinton [author of both *The Outsiders* and *Rumble Fish*] during *The Outsiders*. I loved the boys I was working with. I just wanted to enjoy making a movie and feel like I was working in my own personal style. Yet when I do a film like that, people now expect it to have some loaded trap door. Other directors' movies, dealing with contemporary subjects in a very realistic way, are more or less the same. People expect me to be nutty, weird, or at least a little unusual or strange.

*CR: What kind of experience was it to shoot a rumble?*

FC: The fighting was really hard to do. In *Rumble Fish* there was just two guys fighting. I wanted a fight that was somehow extended with dance. So I hired Michael Smuin who worked with stuntman Buddy Joe Hooker. Buddy Joe came up with the idea of the motorcycle. It took a lot of shots and was another reason we went over budget. It took eight nights instead of the planned three. *Rumble Fish* and *The Outsiders* have got to be the weirdest twins in movie history.

*CR:* The Outsiders *with a smaller budget made more money than* Rumble Fish *with a larger budget.*

FC: *Rumble Fish* had a lot of expensive sound work and was the result of me saying: "Ok, I've done *The Outsiders*, let me make something more personal now that I can enjoy." They felt I had been a good boy and had done *The Outsiders* the way I was supposed to.

*CR: Author William Goldman criticizes the auteur theory because it overcredits the director while ignoring the contributions of the cast and crew.*

continued page 89

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## TWO ESSAYS ON LANGUAGE

### POSTMODERN CULTURE AND PARADOX

**Timothy Ruger**

The fashionable phrase of contemporary literary theory has been: INTERROGATE THE TEXT. The Gallic masters of literature, aesthetics, and philosophy, fueled by a parsimonious "foundation" in structured linguistics, have decided that everything is a text and nothing remains unsullied by ideological constructs. Some readers may prefer studying the debaucheries of Lord Byron or the futile triumphs of Don Quixote to traversing the labyrinths of Mssrs. Derrida, Foucault, or Lacan. In fact, even literary history, irreparably vilified by the so-called "New Critics," has enjoyed a rebirth of sorts. But the traditional literary historians would find the neo-Nietzschean genealogies of Foucault quite abominable: writing as if (he) had no face.

The *Zelig* of the Elizabethan era may have warned us: Edgar I nothing am (*King Lear*). These French "masters" interrogate their own identities. They say that language structures us more than we structure language. Therefore subvert the structure to attain mastery of it. There's the rub! Consider Jacques Lacan's rejection of Cartesian certainty, "I am not where I think, and I think where I am not." In kind, aesthete Roland Barthes writes, "(Barthes) is intolerant of any image of himself." But alas, they have the right to try to escape logic and structure, to sidestep the issue of a full and stable identity, to not sacrifice daily sustenance, and to adventure into the twilight zone of discourse.

Postmodern culture is inherently paradoxical and, in its self-conscious, self-reflexive stratagems, proudly aware of the fact. Paradox is easy to define and both definitions apply. The definitions are: (1) against prevailing opinion (doxa), and (2) simultaneous affirmation and negation. A definition of "postmodern" is by no means an easy task—it is plurivocal, literally "many voices." Whether one surveys the list of postmodern terminology in history, science, aesthetics, or ethics (jouissance, blurring of genres, synchronicity, plurality of meaning, interest in kitsch, to name a few of the terms), one thing stands certain: These postmodernists never agree and do not wish to. This third Sophistic (or Third Testament, to use William Blake's idea) says nothing of social theory (the collective is a black box full of noise), but has had enormous social implications. The underlying "foundation" is a linear arrow pointing to Zeno. Postmodern culture is trying to conceive of differences and contradiction without opposition. Yes, there are three answers to the square root of 2, and agreeing with William James, it is impossible for 14 minutes to pass. Postmodern culture has focused on the relativism, the trace, the essential contradiction that the text and life contain. I will offer an analysis drawn from popular culture.

Postmodern culture has seen little difference between "high" and "low" art. In fact, postmodernism takes great interest in popular forms of medium or convention, while giving these forms a new and exuberant twist. To paraphrase Frederic Jamieson, postmodern culture scopes the whole landscape of motels and advertising. Although many examples could be drawn from popular culture (e.g. punk music, MTV, rock album covers, etc.) the film *Lawrence of Arabia* will provide an exemplary illustration of the relationship of postmodernism to paradox.

T.E. Lawrence is the archetypal Nietzschean. He is the direct result of what Alistair MacIntyre has called "liberal individualism." To use Camus' phrase, "he negates the Gods and raises rocks." Like Nietzsche, Lawrence has aspirations to God-like status—he negates "The Sacred Text" by claiming, "Nothing is ever written."

Lawrence rescues an aide left behind in the desert (it was written that the aide would die), the aide murders another Arabian tribe member, and Lawrence unknowingly volunteers to kill the murderer. Lawrence sacks Damascus from across the desert, then believes he can enter the Ottoman Empire unnoticed. He is found out by the Turks and raped. In essence, the last gasp of free will in the face of determinism. Textual rape becomes closure in meaning: EVERYTHING IS WRITTEN!

Lawrence the deconstructionist is physically deconstructed. Then Lawrence states, "I am not God, I am only a normal person." The ethics of free will become located in the absurdity of the existential and responsible choice. The absurd (paradox, and/both reasoning, etc.) confronts Aristotelian bivalence (logos, either/or reasoning, etc.) Bivalence wins because it is the parasitic breeding ground for power, violence, rape, and determinism. Nietzsche and Lawrence lose to nature by the very will that subdues and conquers it!

One is left with the irreducible paradox that coalesces between the tensiveness of "Nothing is written" and "Everything is written." Did Lawrence win? Yes and no. We can now reread Eliot as his subject matter, as hollow men: between free will and determinism falls the shadow. Creation or discovery of knowledge? Romantic idealism or logical positivism? Creation of language or the prison-house of language? As Colin Wilson has written, Lawrence (as an "Outsider") did have movement and speed to find comfort in the

**Joan Miró, *Carnival of Harlequin*, 1924-25,** oil on canvas, 26 × 36 5/8 in.

paradoxical flux. One wonders if Lawrence's death (motorcycle accident) was self-destruction.

William Blake was not mad, but exactly correct—The Marriage of Heaven and Hell. The nexus for this battle in epistemology lies between yes and no, between science and art, in the excluded middle, in the dire straits of what Michel Serres has called the Northwest Passage. It is time to have T.H. Huxley and Matthew Arnold shake hands. We were always assured by style (how write?) with the indelible stamp of such masters as Flaubert, James, or Camus. Now to answer Sartre's question (why write?), we must become pantheists to preserve the cult of the Gods. And build bridges instead of logocentric walls of arbitrary divisions.

## EVERYTHING IS WITH YOU ALWAYS

R.L. Norton

In the beginning there was absolutely nothing, obviously.

Later, there were abdominal supports, abrasive belts, adapters, aerobic shoes, air cleaners, alarms for bed-wetters, all-in-one foundation garments, Armenian flags, animal cages, ankle exercise weights, anti-freeze toilets, apple corers, auto harps, axle jacks, badgers, bandicoots, bantings, bats, beavers, bison, blesboks, boars, buffaloes, cadavers, cancer, cankers, carbuncles, carnal knowledge, car sickness, catalepsy, cerumen, cestoids, chancres, chapped lips, chilblains, clap, club feet, and crapulence.

There is much more. A complete list will be furnished upon request. What is not presently contained in this or any list are the diaphanous dithyrambs in the air around us.

Just as the human body becomes food for worms, and the worm is used to bait the hook that catches the fish that feeds the editor, so sound also is continuous, limited only by the diapason.

Imagine a line of people a mile long, each precisely twelve inches apart. Standing in front of the first person, you say in normal tones: "Watson, come here, I need you." Or, some such thing. The first person hears perfectly. The last person, a mile away, not at all. The second also hears. As does the third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, and the eighth. The ninth person hears something; the tenth less, and the eleventh nothing.

What has happened? The sound has not merely spent itself like a paper airplane and fallen to the ground. The rustle of nearby leaves and the "braak" of the raven distract from but do not reshape the sound. It is still there.

An analogy may illustrate the point. A peanut butter jar covered in fingerprints may present a bewildering mosaic, but each part of the design is still an integer. A skilled detective can separate and identify each print, unit by unit, until the whole is catalogued.

What is presently being attempted is nothing less than the identification and chronological indexing of every word spoken in the human history of the planet.

"Ha," you say. Or, "I bet. How're ya gonna do that?" Very simple; the way most great accomplishments occur: by accident.

Have you ever noticed the reaction of a field of flowers to a breeze? Or, the way the wind sweeps through a meadow of tall grass? The wind may come consistently from one direction, and the blades of grass can be almost identical in shape; yet one strand or petal will bend a certain way and the next slightly different. These phenomena are the result of dialogue encripted in the wind.

Take a houseplant, preferably an asparagus fern, and place it on a table before you. Now pronounce in a firm voice "great galloping gobs of gooseflesh." Notice the way the leaves behave. Some lean this way and some that. Next, announce, "simmering cisterns of solitude spoil the season." If you had carefully recorded the reaction to the first statement, you now could see how a repetition of sibilants caused the leaves to move much differently.

The vigor and duration of reaction date the encription. The time of day, season, and temperature plotted on the atmospheric circulation chart will give the exact location.

The initial breakthrough occurred early one morning in the patio section of the Doggie Diner on Mission Boulevard in Hayward, California. A tackle football game, using a shoe as the ball, was in progress in the parking lot. The card room next door didn't open until 6 a.m. The wind was whistling through the breezeway; the plants hanging along the walls were whipping themselves, and each other, to death. Although the plants were being beaten, they were each battered differently. Extensive notation began.

After rigorous observation and analysis, the code was finally broken. Here are the circumstances of the first decoded message:

*In the summer of 1887 three men sat in a row boat tied to a pier in the harbor of Samboango. Two of the men were Polish: Baron Ezekial Von Bratkowski, a land holder from the Upper Bug River; and Moe Drabowski, Business Agent for the Stevedores, Hodcarriers & International Tradesmen Union. The third gentleman was evidently a Doge from Venice, Italy.*

*Nothing extraordinary is revealed in their conversation. They merely discussed some hiking plans. The event, the first to be deciphered, is filed under "87 Row/2PP/ Sam/ Dog/ Hike/ Hike!"*

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# Runways

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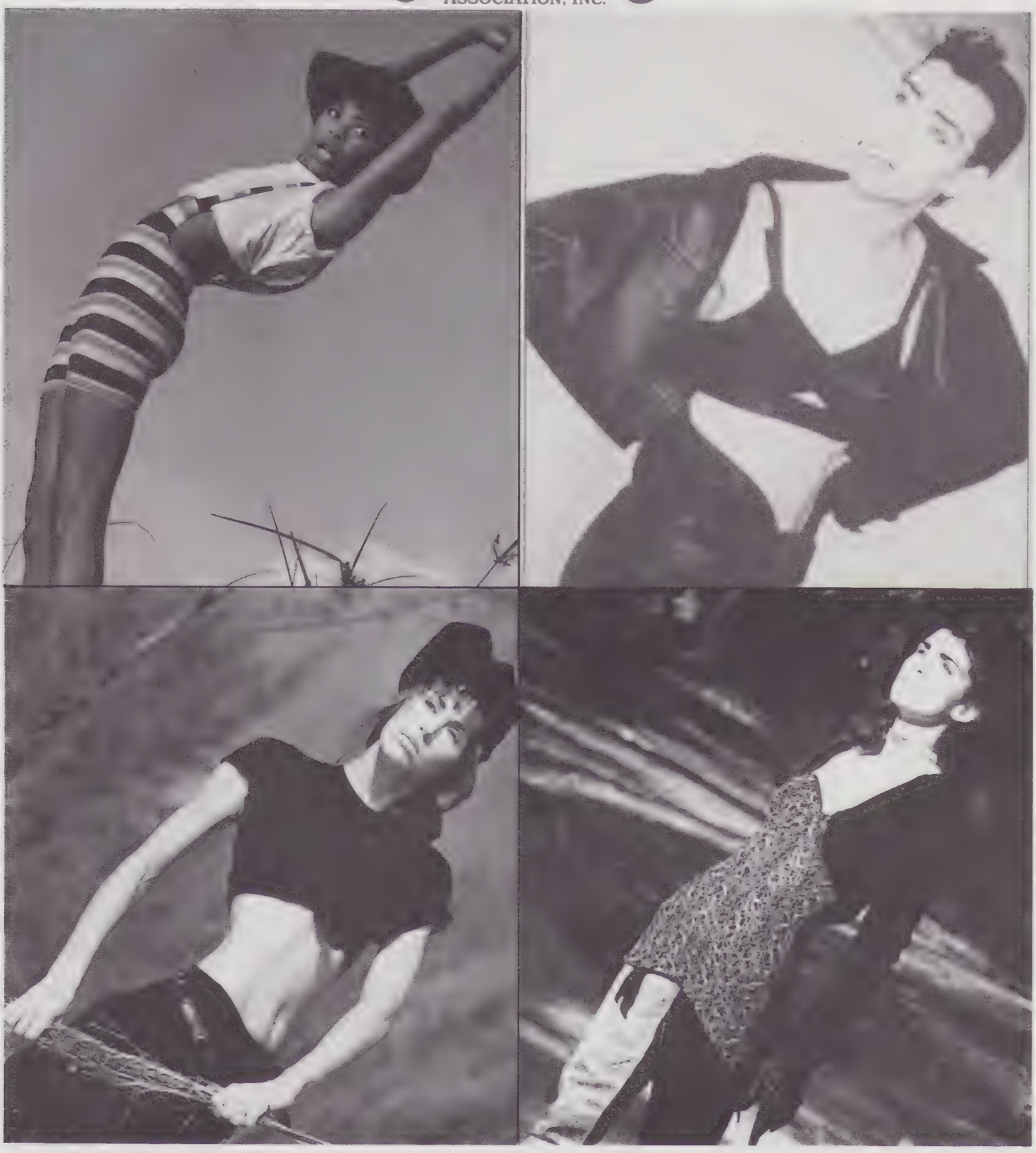


PHOTOS:
Heidi Lane
STYLIST:
Danny Santiago

MODELS:
ADELLE
MELISA
DEBORAH
ANA

FC: You'll never see "A Film by Francis Coppola" on my films. Everyone knows the cast and crew are very talented people, but I'm the guy in charge, acting as the surrogate leader. If a film's a big success, it's a Coppola film. But if the film is a huge failure, it's still a Coppola film. The director is like the general of the army making the film. Everyone knows it takes a ton of talent to make a film, but I was entrusted to guide it. If it's going to be a failure then it's my failure for guiding it. This is the way the auteur theory makes sense.

*CR: What does success mean to you?*

FC: Success can mean a lot of pain and mess up your life as much as any kind of failure. Real success however, not the success of *Entertainment Tonight*, but success in the satisfaction of what you're doing and thinking about, the sense that you conduct your life for yourself rather than as part of some marketing plan; that's another type of success too. But I remember running into George Lucas shortly after he knew that *Star Wars* was going to make him incredibly wealthy and all I could think was what a punch in the stomach he just got.

*CR: Are you referring to negative media and that you're constantly in the public eye?*

FC: Partly. I know the press cynically believes that if you don't want the publicity, you don't go out and try to get it. There are others, far more successful than I, who don't get all this publicity. When you've become as notorious as I've become, they think I'm doing it to get attention. Then success becomes a gag. They become pissed off at you or jealous and they don't want you to own Boardwalk or Park Place. The only thing that keeps me going is my home. I live in this great place and it would be so depressing to lose it. I really could live well on peanuts, but I don't want (bankers) to repossess my home. If it weren't for this, I'd be hard at work trying to write some of my ideas. *The Cotton Club*, *Peggy Sue Got Married* and *Gardens of Stone* are someone else's ideas that I was assigned to direct. Maybe in two or three years I'll be able to direct material I've written. Or maybe never.

*CR: What types of movies do you want to make after* Tucker*?*

FC: The movies I want to make can't be made until the way of making them can evolve a little bit too. Not just the technology but the systems. The systems is a kind of technology.

*CR: By "systems" do you mean creating custom made programs to fit in with your equipment and goals?*

FC: Exactly. It's not enough to have all this great equipment. We have to know how to work with it and how all the artistic parts really operate. Obviously it's related to film as live television, 24 track recording and theater. It's all a process. Every film I made was an experiment to arrive at a different way to make movies.

*CR: What do you think about when you're not thinking about movies?*

FC: I think about movies maybe less than you might imagine! I'm thinking about what civilization is really about and what people are really like. I think about the economic situation and which institutions seem to be running everything. It's sort of like studying ancient Rome, except it's contemporary. I clip the newspaper and try to understand exactly what's going on.

*CR: How do you want to be remembered in film history?*

FC: As a champion of both innovation and youth. My work with kids has been overlooked. The financial chaos must be recorded and was one result of my sincerity and enthusiasm. My sincerity is at the root of many things I do that people can't imagine I would be sincere about. So they assume I'm cynical about it or that I'm trying to put something over on them. I feel misunderstood because I really am sincere about everything I've done. The work I've done in technology has been overlooked. I don't think anybody can quite see the point of my work in technology so they can't quite evaluate it. Some factions think that my work with electronics doesn't amount to anything. Others think that the processes I worked on never came to pass and no article has outlined our inventions. Of course our work on electronics is still under development just like I'm still under development. It's better to evaluate what I'm going to do with all this stuff instead of evaluating my past. I'm 48 not 88. Maybe when I'm an old guy I'll look at my films and say: "I was very dumb or I was very smart."

JOHN EDER PHOTOGRAPHY NYC 212 420 1252

# SEX, LIES AND FATAL FOOTWEAR

## WAITING FOR GUIDO

The Baroness von Greuszingh is a dangerous woman indeed. For a time she was preoccupied with gentlemen who belonged to what was formerly called the Cosa Nostra.

At the beginning she rendezvoused on frequent indiscreet occasions with a handsome, well set-up gentleman named Paco. He was a hit man, or what one might call a goon -- though by day he sold automobiles and rode about in a golf cart at the country-club. By night he dumped garrotted deadmen into the depths of Lake Erie, on the shores of which he owned a voluptuous mansion ensphered by sleek black Lincolns, Cadillacs and police cars of dubious license. She claims he was a gentle lover with a tender kiss and a smooth *modus operandi*. But then she became involved with the Don.

He was a generation older than her, and bore an exasperating resemblance to Franz Liszt, a personage of whom he had never heard and whose name he could not pronounce even when he tried. For breakfast the Don devoured six eggs and a prime rib in order to keep his form fit, potent and erect. From the intimate testimony of the Baroness herself, these measures were not without the intended effect.

The Don was quite enamored of the Baroness, and the appellation which he bestowed upon her was The Baby Doll. Their romance, though more or less illicit due to the fact that the Don's wife was not as yet deceased, became legendary in the district because the Baroness, as we know, was chatty, and not inclined towards keeping the secrets of secret liaisons. More nefarious than this, however, were the rumors that began to exfiltrate the town, for the Don was, in facade, a respected VFW millionaire who lived in a Gothic home and traded in antiques. Not in narcotics.

In no time the affair began to sour, as such forbidden passions inevitably do. But the Baroness, a woman of fury, was not to be scorned without repercussion. And one fine morning in the local coffeeshop, amid breakfasters, babies, bureaucrats and the Daughters of the American Revolution, she arose from her table in a rage, announcing, "I'm going to break this town wide open!"

As it so happened, the Baroness lived across the street from the cemetery, a locus she now focused upon through her binoculars to tabulate the comings and goings of those mysterious drug dealers who traded their wares *á couvert* behind the arborvitae and the tombstones decorated in geraniums by the DAR on Memorial Day. Finally, in a fit of pique, or perhaps for the intrigue, the Baroness decided to turn in her

## SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION & YOU:

**Sam Anderson was raised a poor, small farm child, despite the fact that he was tall. He reached adolescence during the Repression Years, when times were tough all over, and suffered his first tragedy. His mother, a poor, grubby drudge with a kind heart, was trampled to death by a bull while she was beating rugs in the garden, where she also raised irises, gardenias and broccoli. Thus Sam became an orphan, since Sam's father, a caitiff by trade, had left home several years ago and was rumoured to have been mortally wounded in battle during the Siege. His mistress, guilt-ridden because she had begun the Siege, attempted to fling herself off the windmill, but was caught on one of the blades and spun round and round for nearly two years before anyone discovered her body, which was by then, rather skeletal and crow-pecked. But that is another story, and we are getting off the track.**

**In fact, Sam was a child neither born on the wrong side of the track nor the right side: he was a child born on the train. His twin sister, arriving just minutes later, was stillborn. She plagued Sam all his life. For the rest of his days Sam claimed to hear her voice giving him directions, such as "turn right here" or "turn left". For this reason he could never find his way home, and would be lost for days wandering aimlessly through the wilderness or moorlands, which were overgrown with heather.[1] When Sam did return home, though, he would relate fascinating tales of his adventures in the wood to his poor mother, who would feed him a meager ration and tuck him in to his straw bed. Before it was torched, his poor cat would curl up beside him and purr softly, or, if it were hungry, it would bray.**

**After witnessing his mother's death that fateful day, Sam swore to avenge her demise, so filled with anger and revenge was he. He packed what few rags of cloth-**

# ELVIS'GHOST

## MEMORIES OF MY MOTHER

former lover to the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The Baroness and I went down to the county seat and spoke one afternoon to a wan, bespectacled federal agent who said little and nodded a lot in jaded assent. "What can we do?" he would say, as he stubbed out his cigarette and sent us away.

Disgusted by the government's insouciance, the Baroness took the matter into her own hands: and on various nights I found myself driving through the county with the Baroness, following this or that automobile, careening out of alleyways, hiding on sidestreets while dealers made deliveries, and once, sitting in a lonely car all night long, as on a police stake out, outside some neon-lighted, low-life dive, waiting for the Don to emerge and face his retribution. The Baroness had a camera and a snub-nosed pistol under the seat of her car. Uneasily I wondered which she would use first. At 5 AM when the Don came out, she shot him, apropos of nothing. (With the camera.)

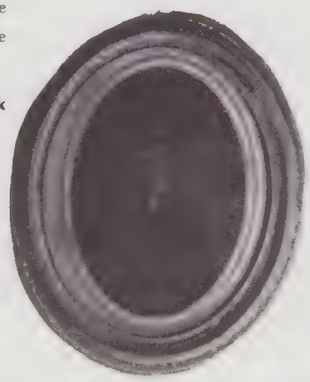
What followed were weeks of frightening phone calls, and gruesome promises bespoken by anonymous voices. In the dead of night, trench-coated shadows smoked cigarettes beneath the streetlamps in front of our house. And once, on a twilight ride through the countryside to view the sunset, the Baroness and I were surrounded at a hilltop crossroad by an entourage of sombre-hued vehicles which endeavored to pursue us high-speed through hills and valleys of dark, dirt roads until the Baroness, clever as always, shut off her lights and drove into a grove of weeping willows.

The climax of this unseemly narrative occurred as follows:

At home, our piano sat in a small sunroom, favored by a wall of long windows and a quartet of quaint Victorian lamps. On a night in October, as I patiently practiced the Sposalizio from Liszt's *Années de Pèlerinnage*, a shot rang out, a window broke, and a Victorian lamp of green and gold shattered above the piano, spattering glass upon the keyboard like Liszt visiting revenge upon my lack of virtuosity.

Shortly thereafter I moved to the opposite end of the state, and the Baroness went south for the winter.

**L. D. Black**



## Part 1 of a Series

**ing he had, a loaf of crusty bread, two of every animal he could find, and an apple, which, unknown to him at the time, was infested with weevil, and set out to do what he knew in his heart he had to do: kill that bull. This was the day when Sam's life took on clarity. This was the day that Sam discovered Purpose. Life, which to Sam was always just something to do until Eternal Damnation, took on new meaning. He now breathed in passion heavily, his nostrils flaring in the process. He headed toward the moorlands.**

**Sam was thirty-two when he was discovered, smarshing through the moorlands, by a Mountie who tied him to the back of his horse and drug him home to care for him. Sam, who by this time was merely a poor, simple, blithering fool, was then able to eat his first square meal in nearly twenty years. The Mountie's wife, you see, was deeply concerned and made sure Sam had one thing from each Food Group. For dessert, she tossed him a banana, which he was unable to open. The Mounties were kind, considerate, gentle people and, although poor, they took on the care and feeding of this poor scullion. They could teach him one thing, and so they chose to instruct him in the most important lesson of all: God's Word. They taught him the Bible. Sam's life would never be the same.**

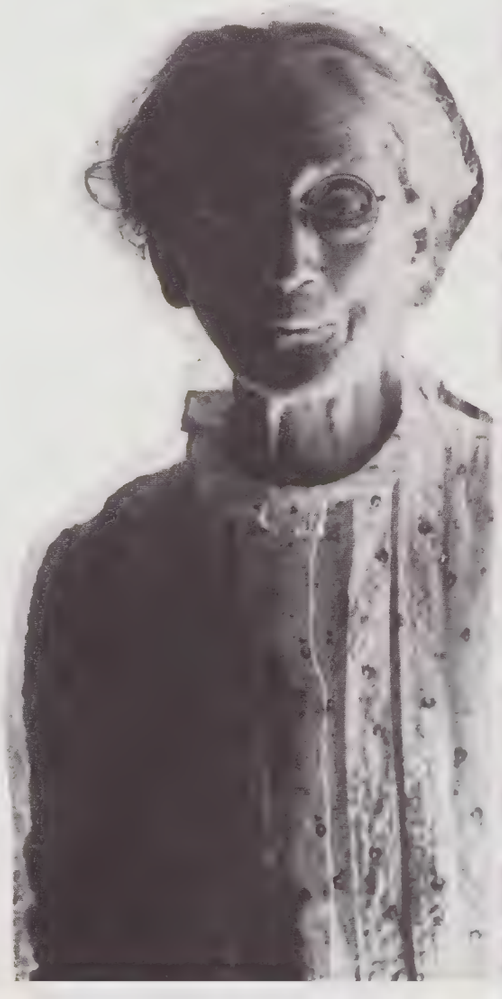
**II**

**It is summer in the hot, dry, dreary patch of unfertile land known as East Pariah, Texas. The local ruck gathers at a lonely crossroad to await its Pastor. Off in the distance, dust flies beneath the wheels of a vehicular Chapel as it accelerates towards them. And so arrives The Church of the Word Made Flesh-From Apocalypse to Our Lips. After it screeches to a halt, Sam Anderson jumps out. The crowd immediately flocks inside to put their quarters in the "Visions of the Virgin" machine, and to touch the twenty-foot statue of Jesus which, after it is hoisted into an upright position, towers tantalizingly above the trailer. The crowd then gathers round the orbicular pulpit. Sam pulls out the Holy Writ from beneath his armpit and prepares to deliver the day's sermon: Hell, Fire, and Damnation. Then a curious thing occurs. Sam bursts into flames. The ruck recoils in horror. The pulpit has turned into a funeral pyre.**

**Yes, Sam's life ended tragically. But his son, a poor, scrubby little lout born of virgin birth from an East Pariah whore, escaped unsinged before the neon lights caught flame and the mobile Chapel exploded. Sam's son, who was never named but simply called Sam's son, or Samson for short, ran as fast as his stubby little legs could carry him in the direction most people call west.**

[1]Sam's aunt, on his mother's side, used to collect heather, but since she was shot last summer by a hunter the heathen has flourished.

**Jordan Crandall**



FRAILIAT FINE F RCHINDRDI COM

# BOOKS & YOU

## ODE TO VOLUMES OWED

*All my life I have subscribed to an aesthetic ethic. I have tried to mold my very existence into a moral* objet d'art. *I loathe the Christian concept of original sin, and sorely resent the idea that only one person, of the billions who have tasted life, could have brought his very being to a state of grand perfection, and that I am not that person.*

*Is there a hope for metamorphosis into mortal beatification? Alas and alac, hell no! Why? Because I am a pathological book keeper. Not a bookkeeper, the only word in the English language with three consecutive sets of double letters, but a retainer of all books which have the misfortune of falling into my possession. I do not actively steal; I just hoard.*

*This pitiful little snag in my character is no great error compared with the sex maniac's rapine and the arsonist's pyromaniacal conflagrations. 'Tis a poor thing, but mine own. However, as such, it embodies the very essence of mankind's imperfectability. Though miniscule, it is an ugly deformity. "What me worry"? "*Au contrair,*" I do worry; I fester; I seethe. I pine for the sin of Oedipus, the hubris of Lucifer. I must be delivered up from this vanilla place east of Eden, this land of nada, this region of marginally bad manners and this fetid Eliotian wasteland of middling impropriety. Yea verily, that is the way my world of hope ends, not with a bang, but a whimper.*

*The problem is thus: I just never return a borrowed book. My library is rich, deep, varied and opulent—and exists as a result of the inadvertent sin of pilferage by omission. The very dictionary I use to look up these words came from a poor naive college roommate twenty years ago. The impecunious lad then had to fork out a modicum of his meager parental stipend to acquire another. That one, I keep at home. Oh, woe to this wretched business. My last will and testament contains the names of several former friends who, upon my demise, are thereby granted the right of biblioperusal in order that they might reclaim the myriad volumes they were guileless enough to let me get my hands on.*

*What demonic depravity of will compels me toward this rude abasement? If one is the least introspective, the mechanism seems of simple construction. One is recommended a "good book" by a respected ally in the long war against intellectual poverty. One expresses keen interest, sometimes even genuine. If exaggerated, this super-expression is only to escalate the sense of scholastic communion and fortify the weldseam of ideological camaraderie. The subject volume changes hands contingent upon its being returned after a thoughtful reading. The receiver knows that more than an object has been passed. The lender has intended to make a gift of a treasured experience, but we all know how subjective a literary moment can be. The receiver can either feign or disappoint; there is no happy medium. He considers sending the lender a copy of Polonius' speech to Laertes. He feels intimidated—tested. The very sight of the book makes him mean-spirited and resentful. By now, he should have read the volume and reported. No explanation at this point, however obsequious, is possible. The book is lain aside. Months slide by. The borrower quite suddenly recalls the book as an adjunct to some unrelated conversation and is immediately pierced-through by the fire-arrow of literary guilt—that anxious rush that floods the ears with hot blood, that purple shame of which only those who trade sacred ideas are aware. There has been a low betrayal. The generous lender is avoided until the friendship wanes or the book is forgotten. The act is done.* Absolve domine.

*Jungians would say that I am in the process of playing out some great archetypal event habitated in the collective unconscious. Freudians would diagnose me as anal retentive. I prefer to think of it as a simple case of tip-of-conscience aphasia.*

*No matter the label, there is no "Book Thieves Anonymous" to comfort a poor wretch like me. There is, however, such an organization for pedestrian cleptomaniacs. One night, sitting*

## THE FLEA MARKET

As I stare across my desk at the wall beyond, my grandfather stares back out of a photograph taken in 1913. Grampa is standing, hands on hips, in front of a wooden building in Detroit. Next to him is his younger brother, who was almost shot outside a bank frequented by the Purple Gang. When futurologists are poking through these ruins and they come upon this wall with the picture of Grampa still hanging on it, will they wonder what those guys meant?

In southwestern America there are dwellings carved into the sides of cliffs. In one of these cave-like abodes, scratched on a wall, are the stick figures of a horse and a man. Lying on the ground between them is an object that could be a small animal, a dog maybe. To the man's left is another small object, a possum, perhaps. If both small objects were indeed possums, or more correctly, opossums, then we have horse (H) followed by opossum (O) and man (M) ending in another opossum (O). Clearly someone was on the verge of an early theory of homology: likeness in structure or function between part of different organisms due to evolutionary differentiation from the same or a corresponding part of a remote ancestor.

Or maybe the stick man was just a favorite relative, standing near his pet horse or yak, followed everywhere by his two doggies, one of whom became that night's supper. But, let's not oversimplify or we will get weepy.

In my closet is a box that once held 24 cans of Hunt's tomato sauce and now contains upwards of a thousand photographs. Are we building walls fast enough to hold all the pictures we take? Probably not. I have pictures of people I have never seen before. Being the custodian of these pictures means I have certain responsibilities, like not throwing them away. I cannot commit these people to the vagaries of the sanitation engineer, or that self-taught paleontologist, the flea marketeer.

Once, at a flea market I was rummaging around in a pile of detritus when I came upon an old photograph of a woman in a shabby gray suit. Around her neck was a stole consisting of what might once have been woodpeckers, sewn together,

*:lone in my library surrounded ny the ghosts of so many acts of treachery and piracy, my haunted gaze froze upon the ill-gotten pages and I telephoned that den of reformer thieves. I was in the depths of a soul felt, guilt-ridden malaise. The hostage volumes, filled as they are with such lofty principles, mocked me to the very marrow of my being. They threatened to leap from their shelves and crush the avaricious life from my biblio-acquisitive body. I half hoped they would—"a consummation devoutly to be wished." A sleepy voiced ex-shoplifter answered at the other end. He was a lawyer who had once felt compelled to steal meat from supermarkets. He was apprehended in his larceny while standing in a check-out queue, ostensibly waiting to purchase a large silver egg which would later hatch into sun-tan sheer pantyhose for his wife. The hiatus was of such extensive duration that the filet, which he had obtained by five-finger discount, began to thaw, oozing blood from beneath the hatband of his fedora and streaking his face and eye-glasses crimson. This contemporary Jean Valjean terminated his felonious toil in a pool of blood, sweat and tears.*

*The barrister narrated his entire life story in agonizing detail. There was a strange and fleeting catharsis in the sick disgust I felt, but this odd nauseam soon passed. He was just another missionary, bent on shairing his testimony, doing his penance, seeking his absolution; he understood naught of my state. He offered to forward self-help books through the mail if I would be sure to return them. What fools these lawyers be!*

*The melanoma yet devours my soul and the plaintive shriek of scores of thousands of refugee pages blinds my ears. In other ways I am THE GOOD MAN, but these kidnapped missals remain displaced captives of my unrelenting depravity. This blight defames my sterling heart as discovering a used Band-Aid in one's vichyssoise defiles an otherwise impeccable repast.*

*Help! If anyone knows a solution to my problem, please communicate same posthaste. If there are but a few paragraphs of succor out there, rush them forth anon. I will consume them as the starving man tastes of his first ladle of life-restoring broth. 'Tis practical but sagacious philosophy I seek. There must be wayward others like myself. My heart knows them and yearns for closer kindrence. If there be spiritual or scientific words of healing, volumes of comfort and compassion, hie them hence.*

*Unless they are damned good, don't bother to include a return address.*

**C. J. Ingram**

end to end, forehead to cloaca. One side of the woman's face drooped completely out of control. The left side of her mouth and left eye were an inch lower than the right. I thought it might be an early publicity still of Janis Joplin, but closer inspection revealed that it was nobody. The eyes, such as they were, lacked any hint of the lunacy of a Joplin or Virginia Woolf, suggesting several six-packs of chromosomes more than is absolutely necessary. The poor lady was merely dreadful.

I decided to buy the picture and take it home and hide it. If pictures of my relatives ever started turning up at flea markets, maybe somebody would be kind enough to do the same. The man who owned the picture wanted $3.50 for it, not including the frame. I explained to the man that I had only recently passed up the chance to buy a cancelled 1954 post card from the Frontier Hotel in Las Vegas for only a buck. Furthermore, the card had a picture of Ronald Reagan wearing an apron that said "Pabst Blue Ribbon." The man was firm. I was tempted to make an insulting remark about the price of binoculars in the Land of the Blind, but considering that the woman in the picture could have been his mom, I simply walked away.

**R. L. Horton**

Photographs by Tina Paul

Excerpt from The John Kirk Story

He wasn't ready for a standard
macro biotic diet--far from it.
The small intestine was only a shadow
of what it had once been. Michael told John to
cook rice, barley, and millet
in large amounts of water for a long time
and then process the soupy products
through a food mill.
The result would be a sort of grain milk.
John's body
could not digest the rice or barley,
but it did accept the millet.
He would live, after all.
He moved in with his parents
where all he primarily did was eat millet soup
and sleep.
After six months, his body was strong
enough to digest buckwheat and soon
after that, apples.
It took a year before he could add vegetables
to his diet and a year and a half
before his intestines
could assimilate brown rice.
Even now there are some basic foods that
he cannot eat, sauerkraut, and other
members of the cabbage family.

Dana Robinson

## Contributors

**JOYCE DALTON** is a fifth grade English teacher in Teaneck, New Jersey. She is also a free-lance travel writer whose articles and photography have appeared in such publications as the *Los Angeles Times*, *New York Daily News* and *Chicago Tribune*.

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**C.J. INGRAM** is a freelance writer living in Memphis, Tennessee. He refers to himself as a "card-carrying columnist."

**JOSEPH JACOBS** is curator of modern art at the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art in Sarasota, Florida. Mr. Jacobs has received degrees from Rutgers College and Brown University, and has taught art history at Boston College, St. Lawrence University and Bucknell University. Among the exhibitions he has organized are *Faces Since the '50s: A Generation of American Portraiture*, *Since the Harlem Renaissance: 50 Years of Afro-American Art*, and *This Is Not a Photograph: Twenty Years of Large-Scale Photography, 1966–1986*.

**R.V. MAY** is originally from the mountains of Tennessee where he once worked in a coal mine. He currently lives somewhere in Florida, but is looking for a new locale or, as he puts it, "an electorate smart enough, or stupid enough to elect me pope."

**MARY NELL McCANN** is a California journalist who spends half of the year in Great Britain. Her works have appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, *San Francisco Examiner*, *British Heritage*, *The American* and many other publications.

Iconoclastic **TIMOTHY RUGER**, poet, born-again nihilist, musician, performance artist, has authored numerous articles, including, "Rock and Roll: Movement, Heat and Noise." He is currently teaching at Louisiana State University.

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## ON FRENCH FURNITURE

Furniture during the second half of the seventeenth century and during the reign of Louis XIV (1643-1715) was rectilinear, often abruptly angular in appearance and bounded by straight lines; occasionally softened and relieved by a carved ornament which disguised, but did not change, the fundamental severity of the style. This rigidity remained until the eighteenth century when it was dispelled by a new curvelinear conception of design which revolutionized the form of furniture. The cabriole leg in the hands of the French became a very important part of the curvelinear composition, certainly during the reign of Louis XV (1723-1774).

The fun-loving court of Louis XV, a greater appreciation of the art of conversation, the changes at Versailles from vast ballrooms to small livable rooms, gave an impetus to furniture design which brought a host of small pieces such as writing tables, love seats, card tables. Louis XV furniture represents a triumph of curves, one of the characteristics which makes recognition possible at first glance. With ease and luxury as their guiding principles, artists created a fullness of comfort and a wealth of decoration.

Whereas Louis XV was synonomous with Rococo, a reaction to its excesses dawned in the mid-eighteenth century leading to the transistional style and ultimately to the period of Louis XVI (1774-1793), a man of simple taste, limited intellegence and far removed from his subjects.
After years of indifferent monarchs and an aristocracy intoxication with classical democracy, the people rose and the revolution broke out. The furniture responsive to the trend toward classicism and greatly influenced by the excavations of Pompeii and Herculeneum appeared in lighter straighter forms. The bombe front commode of Louis XV gave way to the rectangular form which we know today; the straight leg, round, tapered and fluted replaced the elaborate cabriole and classical ornament was used as decoration. In its rectangular contours and restrained decoration, Louis XIV furniture represented a natural reaction from a florid exaggerated taste to a relatively simple one.

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HAVE IN COMMON?

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# THE LION AND THE VIRGIN

L.D. Black

There are many kings. Good, bad, blind like Oedipus, mad like Lear. There is the Lion, most imperious king of all, who sits upon his solar throne mastering all mere mortals, overruling every star in the galaxy. Then there is the Virgin, equally despotic, who emanates as much tyranny and just as much will. But while the Leo unleashes his savage ego like a beast upon his territory, the Virgo drives his ego inward until he has mastered himself.

Leo the Solar King never questions his own authority, doubts his supremacy nor sacrifices dignity. In his mind he's Michelangelo's Sistine Deity reaching out to the ineffectual world with one finger, and yet that is enough. The Mercurial Virgo seems servile by contrast. He follows the dictates of Leonine kings and performs the lowliest task. His is the realm of service and he agrees to do the labors that no one else will do. But in his secret soul there reigns a Herculean arrogance: since no one is able to toil so tirelessly and suffer so silently, no one is as capable of Olympian immortality. The pride of the Leo is self-evident, but the pride of the Virgo is self-proven.

Typically the Leo is affable, overbearing and beneficent, like King Arthur, Old King Cole and Good King Wenceslas in one. He's Pope Julius II towering above all Christendom saying "*domine, domine . . .* " While he's praised and obeyed he rewards his subjects with loyalty, charm and boundless generosity. He has exalted ideals like his Virgoan confrere, but he's not one to flinch in the face of unorthodoxy if that's what it takes to uphold them. When Percy Bysshe Shelley, the Leonine English poet, wearied of his first wife, he nevertheless would not abandon her. Scorning the Victorian code-of-the-day, he invited her to live with him and Mary Wollstonecraft, not *à la ménage à trois*, but as a sister. He was devastated when the woman committed suicide instead.

Unlike the Leo, Virgo was not blessed with a lot of magnanimous love. He has a chilly heart, and on days when he's feeling particularly pure, he comes off like dry ice. Fastidious and fussy, he's holistically disadvantaged because he cuts everything to pieces with his psychic scissors and proceeds to analyze only the scraps. He's a pedantic bore at his worst, pompous as H.L. Mencken, or the scheming Cardinal Richelieu, Louis XIII's power-behind-the-throne. But at his best he's a classic savant, like Johann von Goethe, and his percipient analyses may eventually create something wonderful and new. Only an intricate Virgo mind like Arnold Schoenberg could have invented the twelve-tone scale, revolutionizing music in one iconoclastic blow.

Both the Lion and the Virgin are notably cerebral types. But this is less recognized in the Leo who puts on such a grand display that he undermines his brilliance with his braggartry or the unpopularity of his *causes celebres*. No one disputes the power of Bernard Shaw's plays and essays, but he's recalled as a cut-up and a *character*, if not the very caricature of himself. Similarly, the astute social and scientific observations of Aldous Huxley are unfortunately eclipsed by his voyages into mysticism, psychedelia and the occult. Artist Marcel Duchamp is extolled by his successors as the greatest art influence of the twentieth century, but the layman evaluates him on the basis of his caprices and pranks. Even the saintly C.G. Jung, controversial giant of psychotherapy, is secretly sneered at behind the closed doors and closed minds of the still predominant Freudian school. Despite the Leonine ego traps, there is something noble, even awesome, about the Lion's courage in the face of prevailing dogma, and his unwillingness to compromise belief before approbation.

While Virgo produces its own breed of rebels, they comprise the quiet conspiracy whose moral or didactic outbursts are usually unthreatening to the status quo. This is because of the reserved Virgoan *style*. Goethe might have been a cad on the quiet, and *Faust II* a literary morass, but he presented himself as a statesman, a renaissance man and above all a gentleman. Tolstoi was an intractable religious fanatic in his dotage, but he's revered for his masterful literature; and even his political propaganda, though spurned by the Imperialists, was applauded by the Russian people and forgotten by the rest of the world. Tolstoi was a hard worker and a simple man. Never mind the subversion fermenting in his soul. Dr. Johnson was of course the quintessential Virgo. Pedagogic and precise, he devoted his life to lexicons, Latinisms and *The Lives of the Poets*. But his heart was full of that Virgoan discontent: the inability to be perfect in an imperfect world. Through criticism and Classicism he aspired to perfection nonetheless.

Leo men and women are the lovers and libertines of the zodiac and, not surprisingly, Virgos are usually the ascetics. Not all Lions are rapacious sexual beasts, and not all Virgins are virginal. But a fairly accurate illustration can be drawn form the Masterwork of Samuel Richardson: Robert Lovelace was a Leo, Clarissa Harlowe, a Virgo.

Irrefutably, the Leo woman is physically alluring; but this has less to do with the way she looks than the way she *feels* that she looks. There is something of the courtesan about her; and this has *nothing* to do with her morals, but rather, her extravagant demands. Of course she wants to be lavished with love, assured of loyalty, and ornamented with jewels, perfume and chic garmenture. But she also needs to have a reputation of her own. Sometimes she is reputed to be amongst the likes of Mae West and Madame Du Barry. Other times she mingles with the clever, catty clique, like the caustic Dorothy Parker. But the exemplary Leo woman is a solo act like Jackie O., former consort of kings, self-made literat, and enveloped in a mystique so mesmerizing that she's ever in the public eye without even trying. This is the real design behind every Leo woman: to attract endless attention without the slightest effort or apparent intention.

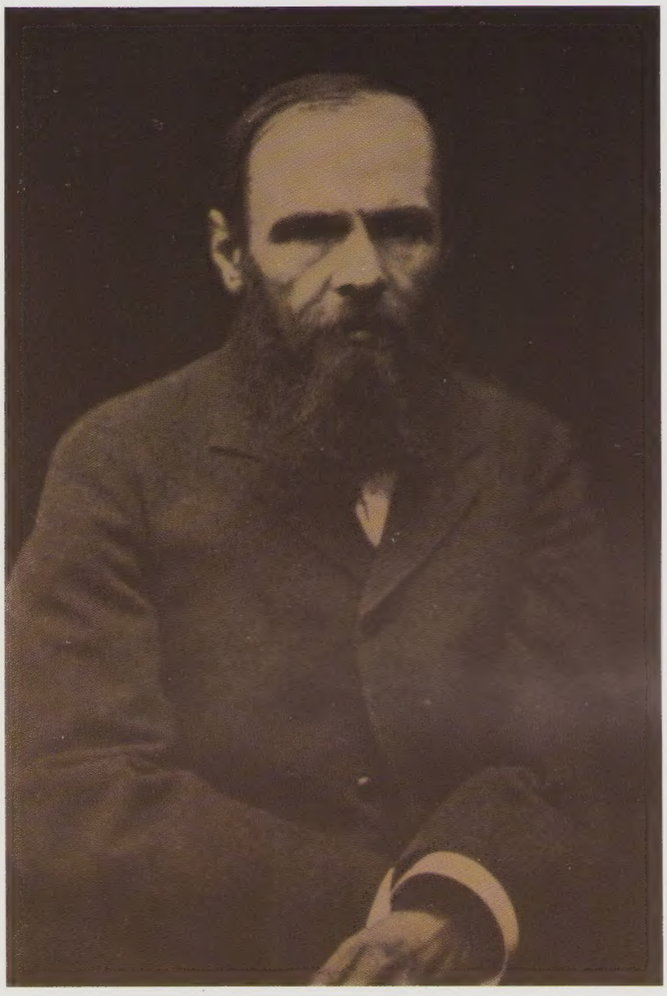
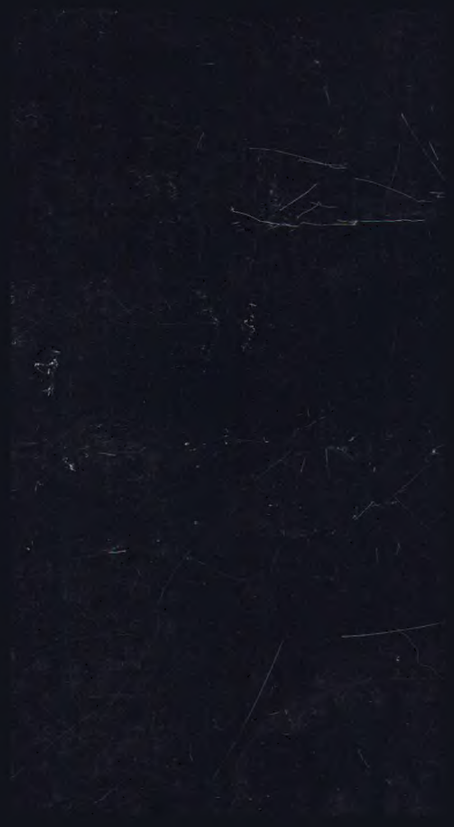
The Leo man is not always Mick Jagger, slithering and slobbering lustily on a stage. Sometimes he's as noble and unpredictable as Peter O'Toole, staring haughtily across the desert at one moment, then enacting some incongruously bizarre stunt the next. When the Lion is most unruly, he's really the most insecure. He requires applause and ovation or he'll whimper and sulk in despondency. The unevolved types are as ego-inflated as Mussolini, bloated with self-laudation, seeking an audience at any price. But there are normal, quiet Lions too, like Robert Redford, who are so genuinely self-assured that they can actually live in Colorado and stay married to one mate.

The Virgo woman is the ice princess. She's not at all sure if she wants to fall in love because love is such a messy and troublesome affair. The Virgin is as gorgeous as the Lion, but she'd rather die than lie on a bearskin rug, and she's more adjusted in tailored suits or military garb than a Leo's string bikini or gold lamé cape. The female Virgo, like Lauren Bacall, can never be too cool or ironical, and only a gruff old Goat, like Capricorn Bogart, can win over her fastidious affections. Greta Garbo, the arch-Virgo, wanted to be alone because lovers and other annoyances became such a tiresome bore. Garbo was decidedly the most beautiful woman in the world, but she rarely smiled for the camera and actually made headlines when she laughed and did the bosa nova—an incident she probably found so unseemly that she became a recluse thereafter.

At his romantic best the Virgo man is Maurice Chevalier—gallant and *amusant*, with a subtle self-deprecatory smile. But the male Virgo is usually not so romantic. He's *strange*, like Peter Sellers, the Mercurial chameleonic type whose emotions one can never know. He'll rarely tell you what, if anything, is in his heart. He hides away in a sexless sanctuary, like pretty Michael Jackson, for reasons inexplicable but suspect. Virgos may have insidious sexual fantasies like everyone else, but they write about them in books, like D.H. Lawrence: or they burn books and vanities and Botticellis in compensation, like Savanarola who, one knows, paid a dear price for his pietism.

Since Leos and Virgos are kings, it is not surprising that so many of them have indeed been leaders, tyrants, presidents and monarchs. What is interesting, and perhaps predictable, is that the Leos, for all their grandeur, are censored in memory and have ended up, more often than not, on the wrong side of the revolution.

Mussolini was shot, Louis XVI, beheaded, and Napoleon sat dejectedly on the isle of St. Helena, exiled and distraught. Fidel Castro, though not an entirely inept ruler, evokes a little snicker form the civilized world, with his khaki clothes, silly boasts, and his blackbearded face and *cigarros*.

The Virgos, on the other hand, are historically lauded for doing their work, dying in grace, and civilizing their countries. Elizabeth I ruled England for half a century of peace, prosperity and a renaissance in the arts. Louis XIV, unlike his doomed Leonine descendant, is referred to as the Sun King though he was not a Solar king at all but a Mercurial one. He *did* love a little extravagance, and left his country bankrupt, but not before he catalyzed the greatest culture France has yet enjoyed. Alexander the Great, fountainhead of the Hellenistic Age, was a Virgo, as was the distinguished General Lafayette. And no one can deny the kingliness of Mother Teresa, the saintly old Albanian nun and handmaiden of the Lord whom in the highest sense exemplifies the Virgoan mantra: I serve.

So it is with the kingly natures of the Lion and the Virgin. The Leo rules through love, even if it is self-love; the Virgo rules through duty. Perhaps the reciprocal lesson is to learn to love one's service, and serve to learn to love.